

EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF RECENT SRI LANKAN SKILLED IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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THESIS

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Declaration

I, the undersigned Karunatissa Hal. Liyanaratchi, Doctor of Education (Research) candidate, certify that:

- a) the work of the thesis is done alone by me and however, due acknowledgement has been made for the advice and support received for my research;
- b) the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award;
- c) the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program, and
- d) editing of some parts of the thesis by the senior supervisor is gratefully acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Karunatissa Hal. Liyanaratchi', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Signed At, 66 Linda Crescent, Ferntree Gully, Victoria
Date: 24th October 2006.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine the employment situation of recent Sri Lankan skilled immigrants in Victoria and whether they need further education and re-training in order to face emerging technological changes or to update their skills. The underemployment and unemployment problem faced by the Sri Lankan skilled immigrants is an issue for both the Australian economy and the migrants.

The following set of premises has been used for the study; a) the migrants' educational qualifications, training and skills are recognised by the Department of Immigration Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) of Australia, b) they are having difficulties in finding and keeping suitable jobs, although some have found employment commensurate with their qualifications, and c) the reason for their difficulties are many and complex. The essential format of the research is to identify and explain the many and complex reasons for such unemployment or underemployment.

This study is based upon a survey of three contrasting Sri Lankan immigrant groups: a) trade persons and related workers with certificates or no qualifications b) technical or associate professionals with diploma or associate diploma level qualifications and c) professionals (engineers) with university degrees or their equivalent. Subjects for the surveys were through three relevant alumni organisations based in Melbourne, and through personal contact. The survey was supplemented with some applying qualitative methods that involved unstructured interviews, and small case studies.

Recommendations have been proposed to assist in solving the issues that were identified through the study. Although the recommendations mentioned in the study provide a starting point, it is stressed that further research is needed to be undertaken before implementing such suggested solutions. Therefore, this thesis serves as a foundation in highlighting the loss of services of skilled immigrants within the labour market in Australia, particularly among the Sri Lankan community, and proposing recommendations to address this issue.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.0 The reason for which prompted me to be interested in this topic

The aim of this study is to examine the employment situation of recent Sri Lankan skilled immigrants in Victoria, Australia and to consider whether they need further education and re-training when faced with emerging technological changes in order to update their skills. This chapter attempts to provide a broad overview of my experiences as a trainee skilled worker, trainer and educator, and community worker. It is semi narrative in style, but attempts to interact with the main theme of the thesis – that of the underutilisation of skills and in particular the skills of migrants in the Australian labour force. This theme is examined through the experiences of one migrant group – Sri Lankan migrants in Melbourne. The survey is the most direct means of examining this issue, and is examined later in the thesis.

Given the length and range of my experiences with skills development and community work both in Australia and Sri Lanka (as well as other countries) this chapter attempts to interweave these experiences with some historical background of Sri Lanka by recounting some of my own experiences.

The Skill Shortage

“Australia will launch the biggest global recruitment drive for skilled migrants since the “ten pound pom” campaign in the 1950s and 60s, as the Government tries to attract 20,000 workers from across Europe and Asia to rescue key industries from labour shortages..... tradespeople, engineers and doctors are believed to be among the most desperately needed.....Meanwhile, opposition (Labour) leader has urged action to encourage Australia’s 900,000 expatriates working overseas to return home or forge closer investment and trade links”.(This is an excerpt from the headline front page news item appearing in ‘The Australian’ newspaper on August 16, 2005)

- ❖ There have been other proposals for solving the skills shortages reported in 'The Age' on 25 Feb 2005 by Tim Colebatch, the economic editor. He reports that, Mike Keating who headed the Prime Ministers Department under Paul Keating, says "sweeping reforms should be initiated to encourage 1.7 million potential workers who are unemployed, underemployed or who have been forced into early retirement to get back into work by upgrading their skills".

These views seem to support the premise of this thesis that there is considerable under utilisation of skills in the Australian workplace, and especially skills held by migrant workers. As stated in earlier sections, significant number of tradesmen and professional engineers has been underemployed. There is anecdotal evidence that migrant workers have failed to secure employment commensurate with their qualifications and experience. In Australia there is no shortage of workers, as ABS data indicate. In January 2006 there were 548,300 people registered as unemployed in Australia. However, there also were 2,851,900 people who were working part-time, and this has increased from 919,700 in February, 1978, and now represents almost one quarter of all employed workers. A worker is classified as employed if he or she has worked at least one hour per week. In 2005, 724,900 part-time workers wanted to work more hours.

Australia had a workforce participation rate of 64.5% in 2003, which is 11th out of 28 OECD countries. Given that the Australian working age population is relatively high, because of immigration patterns, this level of participation is relatively low. In 2005 there were 106,600 people who were not in the labour force but wanted to work. In 2005 the workforce underutilisation rate was 12.2% of the workforce. This figure combines unemployed and under-employed workers, and workers marginally attached to the workforce (ABS, Cat. No. 6105.0).

1.0.1 Labour market experience of Sri Lankan skilled immigrants

My own experiences also have contributed to my interest in the issue. Being a Sri Lankan skilled immigrant, I have faced adverse experiences in seeking jobs in 1975, although I migrated to Australia equipped with overseas qualifications and experience gained in many countries including England, Italy, Sweden and Sri Lanka"

(Please see Section 1.1). My observations, have been that a higher proportion of Sri Lankan skilled immigrants are employed in jobs below their education and experience level, and a considerable number of professionals and trade persons are frustrated and eventually suffer from mental or emotional disorders such as depression, and high blood pressure, that could well be related to their inability to find suitable employment that is commensurate with their qualifications and experience. These observations are drawn from my long experience as a community worker within the Sri Lankan migrant community in Melbourne.

1.0.2 How Australian workplaces are managing recruitment and employment of migrant workers

The manufacturing sector has been used as the location for this study because it has Australia's largest concentration of migrant workers. Given the industrial structure and culture of the sector, and its role in employing migrant workers its ability to fully utilise the skills and qualifications of migrant workers is potentially instructive. This utilisation can relate to such practices as the interviewing practices in Australian manufacturing workplaces through to the internal promotions practices.

Cultural differences can have subtle impacts. For example, according to majority Australian culture it is acceptable to look at interviewers in the eye. However, for a majority of Sri Lankan and some migrant ethnic groups, this is the opposite of how they should conduct themselves in an interview, as it is considered culturally disrespectful or ill-mannered. It may be that such behaviours amongst such job seekers are detrimental to their success in job applications.

Australian manufacturing productivity and growth in the post war years to a considerable extent depended upon the availability of migrant workers. As a consequence Australian workplace management has had to change in order to embrace the migrant worker resource by gaining an understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds. There is a need for closer co-ordination between industry (employers), trade unions, government and other relevant organisations to make sure much needed orientation training should be provided for personnel who are potentially responsible for the recruitment and management of newly arrived migrants workers.

These cultural and idiomatic differences can be illustrated by an occurrence experienced by the researcher. One of my neighbour friends (a Sri Lankan) was running a milk bar at Templestowe, Melbourne, where there was a teenager David employed as part-time sales assistant. The owner friend Pantha had newly married to a girl named Sriya from Sri Lanka. She was only three months in Australia and been assisting her husband at the milk bar. One day when she was at the counter a woman came to her and told “David is not coming to work today as he is crook”. Sriya nodded surprisingly and rushed to her husband Pantha, and said, “Pantha, don’t employ David anymore because his mother came to tell us that he is a crook”.

The researcher has experiences of many similar instances during the 30 years he has lived in this country. Not only Sri Lankans or other Asians, but also newly arrived British families had to face such situations as reported by The Age Newspaper on Thursday, June 16, 2005. Jill Stark reported that “a million of them (migrants) came to Australia by the boat, in search of a better life. Many struggled to fit in, and were branded “whingers”. They were the post-war British migrants, commonly known as the “Ten Pound Poms” A new book “*Ten Pound Poms*”; *Australia’s Invisible Migrants* (Hammerton and Thompson, 2005) shows that –many immigrants from Britain were baffled when they arrived. Some faced verbal abuse and were mocked for being different. In the book, for example, some British migrants talk about being asked to bring a plate to an Australian barbeque, and simply turned up with a plate- with nothing on it!

1.0.3 Choosing the topic for the research:

Over the past half century Australia has had so many migrants and the country has traditionally met a lot of its skill demand through migration. Withers estimates the manufacturing sector has gained half of its skills needs through migrants (Withers, 1981). Much of this migration took place in the 1950s and 60s when the manufacturing sector was expanding. The experience of the Sri Lankan skill migrants is interesting because they have migrated relatively recently – 1970’s, and this has coincided with a period of employment stagnation in the manufacturing sector.

Despite this decline currently (2004-2005) there has been an acute shortage of skill workers mainly in the field of trades and engineering, and this national skills shortage is seen as threatening economic growth. In order to face this situation the Federal Government is planning to increase the skill migrant intake and also train more apprentices (including the recruitment of apprentices from overseas – The ‘Age’, 1/11/05). This plan is discussed in detail in the following chapters.

This research is an opportunity for a major case study of the experiences of one migrant group within Australian industry as there is a high concentration of Sri Lankan migrants in Victoria. Furthermore there are 3 Alumni that each represents the trade (certificate-level), technical (diploma-level) and engineering (degree-level) workers, and which make it possible to access these workers and gain insights into their experiences within the Australian labour market.

1.0.4 Geographic distribution of Sri Lankans

According to department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA, 2001), the latest Census in 2001 recorded 53,610 Sri Lankan-born persons in Australia, an increase of 14% from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 26,670 followed by New South Wales (16,910), Queensland (3,990), Western Australia (2,970), Australian Capital Territory (1,400), South Australia (1,160), Northern Territory (300) and Tasmania (230). However there are perhaps another 10,000 don’t identify themselves as Sri Lankan born or don’t claim Sri Lankan ancestry. These are mainly some Sri Lanka (Ceylon) – born Burghers whose ancestors are descendants of Portuguese, Dutch and British who had occupied the country (then known as Ceylon) for nearly 400 years, as there is a tendency for some of these groups not to claim Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) ancestry.

In consideration of the geographic distribution of the Sri Lankan born population of Australia, Victoria has been selected as the location for the sample for the project, given there is 50% of the total population concentrated in this state.

When estimating the ethnic Sri Lankans in Australia, it has been decided to add the first and second generation persons in Australia, because these two generations are generally identified as Sri Lankan Australians.

1.0.5 Job Seekers' Workshop

On 1st November 1998, a “Job Seekers’ Workshop” was conducted by the researcher at the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and was used to collect a supplementary survey relating to this project. Through this survey, which was verbally conducted, 32 people who had migrated from Sri Lanka identified themselves as having experienced adverse situations in seeking jobs. Some of these people (including Chintha F.)¹ were interviewed at various stages prior to conducting this workshop.

An example is that of Chintha F (an unemployed Research and Development Scientist) who is a Sri Lankan skilled immigrant and was out of employment for two years. She was interviewed by the researcher during the initial stage of the project. She had been under medical treatment due to depression and was continuing to see the doctor. She has applied for many jobs without success. She possesses qualifications including Masters of Science in Analytical Chemistry and Bachelor of Science (Hons), both from the University of Colombo. Since 1992 she had been seeking a job suitable for her qualification and experience. Later she undertook a course at Monash University (1992) is undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy in Analytical and Environmental Chemistry.

Chintha had been a member of the Academic staff of the University of Colombo for four years and she says “The Masters degree required me to carry out some research work with several research organisations where I gained experience in HPLC, GLC, AA, IR, and V-Visible Spectrophotometry etc.”

Chintha has faced many interviews for jobs in the scientific field in which she is qualified and experienced. But to her bewilderment she has always been

¹ All names used within this thesis are pseudonyms

unsuccessful. Typically the responses have been: “You are an academic, and you have no Australian industrial experience.”

Her resume states: *“I am a keen, conscientious, resourceful and motivated person with high intellectual potential. I am emotionally mature and possess an impeccable character, having plenty of initiative and the ability to share ideas with colleagues and am able to perform well with limited supervision. In my academic career I have succeeded in applying myself diligently and positively, quickly learning as I proceed. I am always open to suggestions and will always attempt any problem, attacking in with verve, while working towards creative solutions that are efficient and logical. I believe that all aforementioned attributes and qualifications, together with my work experience, reinforce my ability to become a competent Scientist.”*²

According to her self-analysis her aspirations are high and therefore she had decided to follow a Ph.D. at Monash University. Now Chintha is seeking to gain industrial experience in order to counteract the negative responses of job-interview panels. The problem for her is to how to gain the required industrial experience.

At the above mentioned thirty-two participants from the Job Seekers’ Workshop have had faced similar situations. They possess qualifications and experience in different levels but faced problems with lack of work experience in Australia.

Healey argues that “research on migrants has found that 34.8% of non English speaking background immigrants are over-educated for their jobs and underpaid for their skill level, compared with 11.6% of the Australian born. Studies have also found that people of non English speaking background have less access to training and promotional opportunities in the workplace than Australian born workers. Although there are mechanisms for the recognition of overseas qualifications the process is often slow and difficult and in some cases qualifications are not recognised (Healey, 1997).”

² A copy of the resume was given to the researcher.

Healey's argument is that new skilled immigrants are willing to undertake further training or bridging to enable recognition of their overseas qualifications but for financial reasons they are unable to do so. They therefore work below their level of skills, education and experience.

David Leser, Diana Prince, David Corson and Robbin Attfield all argue that meaningful work is a response to the essential human need of self- respect (Leser, 1998; Prince 1992; Corson, 1988; Attfield, 1984) . David Leser cites, Professor Jock Collins as saying: "The most difficult years of settlement are the first two years. It's a time to great need and yet, this is the time the government pulls the rug out... but it is also a very black-hearted move that shows no compassion or understanding of the migrant process (Leser, 1998)".

According to researchers (e.g. Leser, 1998) many of these skilled migrants are subject to depression, high blood pressure and heart conditions linked to unemployment, under-employment, social and other psychological problems. Colebatch (February 2, 1999), the economic editor of 'The Age' comments: "No problem recks the lives of more Australians than unemployment. To be unemployed is to shut out the mainstream of society, poverty, depression, ill health, crime, drug addiction, even death, are part of the damage it wrecks among families and individuals throughout the nation".

Colebatch's comment can be applied to the unemployment of recent skilled immigrants, who in many cases encounter worse situations. Furthermore, the average unemployed Australians are entitled to Government welfare schemes, whereas recent immigrants are deprived of that aid, and they have to depend on their relatives or friends or funds brought with them (when they migrated) for two years before they become entitled for the unemployment benefits according to Government policy.

According to research by the National Population Council in 1988 and other indicators, about 7,000 of the skilled migrants who arrive in Australia each year are not able to use their skills, although they wish to. The annual cost to the Australian economy is estimated at, between \$100 million and \$250 million. There are also

personal, social and community costs. In the last 20 years Australia has wasted, to varying degrees, the skills of an estimated 200,000 skilled migrants.

Even when a migrant's skills are formally recognised, it does not follow that they will be used. Twenty percent of overseas-trained engineers have their qualifications accepted-but they are still unemployed or under-employed. (Migrant Skills Reform Strategy, Progress Report: 1991)

Various surveys (e.g. Keating et al, 2004; Wooden and Harding, 1997) reveal that recruitment, especially within small firms and for low skills occupations is often through networks, whether they be family, other social networks, alumni or industry and occupational. Migrants typically do not have these networks and can be restricted in their entry into them.

1.1 Observations of Labour Market Experiences

1.1.1 Australia has traditionally met a lot of its skills demand through migration

Australia's experience with the large influx of skilled migrants who entered the country in the late 1980s provides further support for the above concerns. Only 38 per cent of the migrants arriving in Australia between 1986 and 1991 who held degree level qualifications had been able to find employment at the professional or managerial level by 1991. Subsequent analysis of the 1996 Census showed that the situation of these 1986-91 arrivals had not improved. For those holding credentials gained overseas, the proportion employed at the professional or managerial level was just over 40 per cent by 1996, indicating that they had made little occupational progress during the intervening five years (DIMIA: 2001).

This outcome was partly attributable to the onset of the recession in the early 1990s. In addition, many of the migrants in question had entered under the family or humanitarian programs and thus had not been subject to any assessment of their credentials. The selection criteria in place at the time for those who were selected as skilled migrants were also deficient in that they took no account of whether the skills the migrant offered were in demand in Australia. Furthermore, it was only in the early 1990s that DIMIA required most skilled migrants to pass a formal test of their English language capacity. These studies, however, did show that computing professionals

were doing reasonably well in Australia, even when they came from Non-English-Speaking countries. This outcome reflects the high demand for such skills and the relative ease of transference of professionals trained in international programming languages (DIMIA: 2001).

Although migrants may pass the test, their communication skills may be inadequate due to accent and idiom differences. They may not comprehend what is said at interviews, as suggested above. The experience of the late 1980s should not be generalised to the circumstances at the end of the 1990s. By this time the family migration program had been reduced and the selection regime affecting the settlers entering Australia under the skilled programs was better attuned to the needs of Australian employers. To gain selection in the main skilled program an applicant had to possess at least vocational English skills and had to have his or her credentials accepted by the relevant professional or trade authority in Australia. Since the mid-1999, when the system was reformed again, an element of occupational targeting has been included, which favours skills in demand (including computing, accounting and nursing) and gives priority to applicants with Australian qualifications. From the mid-2001, applicants who are former full fee-paying overseas students did not have to leave Australia to apply for permanent residency.

Selection of skilled migrants is based on a points system, which measures factors including skill, age, English language ability, (Australian) qualifications and level of demand for particular occupations. The current 'pass mark' is 110 points. As part of the recent reforms, occupations eligible for selection are classified into 40, 50 and 60 point categories. The 60 point group includes professional fields such as computing, engineering, nursing and some trades. The 50 point group includes occupations where specific university or trade training is not central to employment in the field, for example in various managerial occupations in personnel or public relations work. A number of the scientific occupations such as physicists and mathematicians are also included in this second category. The 40 point category includes various sub-professional fields. Several of the financial sector occupations, such as futures traders and financial investment advisors are classified within this group. Most applicants will struggle to achieve the required pass mark if they do not possess a 60 point occupation unless they are sponsored by relatives in Australia. Most clerical and blue

collar occupations are not listed at all and thus are not eligible to apply. Other occupations that are not listed include doctors and university lecturers, the former because the Australian Government had been anxious to reduce the inflow of doctors because of an alleged oversupply of doctors in Australia and the latter because the opportunities for unsponsored academics are somewhat limited—academics need to be sponsored by their employers under the Employer Nomination Scheme (DIMIA: 2001).

As a result of these reforms, the quality and occupational relevance of immigrants selected under the skilled categories has improved sharply. The latest information (for the first seven months of 2000–2001) concerning the outcomes of those applying under the new Skilled-Independent program (visa category 136) indicates that 29 per cent of all the principal applicants selected were computing professionals and 19 per cent were accountants. The share for these two occupations is well above what it was under the pre-1999 selection system. Also, just over half of the computing professionals and accountants selected so far during 2000-2001 held Australian qualifications. Most of these would have completed these qualifications as full fee-paying overseas students in Australia (DIMIA: 2001).

One hypothesis is that ‘lifestyle’ is a key factor in attracting economic migrants. This term covers a multitude of dimensions, including political security, a crime and pollution free urban setting (relative to parts of Asia and the United States), a low cost of living, good quality (and at least at the university level), low cost education for children, good housing and other urban amenities and nice weather. Another important factor, especially for residents or prospective immigrants of Asian origin is the existence of substantial co-ethnic communities in Sydney and Melbourne. It is not easy to arrive at any definite conclusions about the weight of these factors. There is very little in depth analysis in the literature of the factors shaping international movement to and from Australia. Most of the discussion to date has been anecdotal in nature. However this literature, plus my informal interviews with experts involved in the recruitment of professional staff did support the hypothesis about the importance of lifestyle attractions in Australia’s situation. Nevertheless, the comments that follow should be regarded as preliminary. They are intended to contribute to further debate and it is hoped, will prompt more systematic research on the issue.

Typical of accounts concerning IT personnel is one reported by the Financial Times journalist Fiona Curruthers. After citing the princely salaries on offer to some IT specialists in Hong Kong and Singapore and Australia's relatively tough tax regime, Curruthers is left with the puzzle as to why Australia (according to the IT recruiters in Asia she spoke to) nevertheless does well in the competition for such staff. The answer is personalised via the case of a British IT specialist, who, it is claimed, could earn a fortune in Europe or Asia, but has instead based himself in Sydney for the past decade. This person is quoted as saying that 'Australia will always attract the best people from overseas because, at the end of the day, lifestyle is the number one reason a European would make the transition'. Curruthers herself concludes that Australia, 'wins hands down in the region for lifestyle, low cost of living, less pollution and reliable public health and education systems' (DIMIA: 2001).

The issue of skilled migration has now become linked to that of skills shortages. There has been a considerable amount of recent publicity about skills shortages, and the Commonwealth Government has responded by establishing a number of Vocational Colleges, and proposing changes in workplace organisation.

Subsequently the Government has announced increases to the skilled migration program. These changes are outlined in a letter from the Hon Jason Wood that he wrote to the researcher:

*"Your survey response indicates that you are particularly concerned about the current immigration policy."*³

The Federal Government has introduced a skilled migration program as a means to address the skills shortage in Australia, in particular in regional areas. The 77,880 skilled migrants in 2004-05 accounted for about 65 per cent of the total migration program. At 120,060, the overall Migration (non-Humanitarian) Program was the largest since the late 1980s.

The 2005-06 skilled migrant program will reach around 97,500 places, an increase of 20,000 on last year's record level intake.

Improved targeting of the skilled migration program has resulted in increases over the previous year's number of doctors (294 per cent), nurses (40 per cent),

³ Personal correspondence, 4 August, 2005. Mr Wood is the Federal Member for La Trobe, the researcher's electorate.

accountants (48 per cent) and tradespersons (38 per cent) such as mechanical, electrical, construction and automotive tradespersons. These migrants are playing a vital role in helping to address the critical skill shortages felt by employers in local communities across Australia.

The increase in our program for skilled migrants has proven very successful and the Government is dedicated to the continued enlargement of our skilled migrant workforce.

As noted by Elizabeth Coleman ⁴ this decision followed intensively lobbying from the business sector (and the Reserve Bank Governor, Ian MacPharlane), and involved the dropping of the English language, age and general skills requirements.

The Australian Workers Union welcomed the increase in skilled migrants but warned it was “notoriously difficult” to properly match labour market demands, and the ACTU President Sharon Burrows described the decision as piecemeal. There is some justification for this view from the OECD (see Doudeijns and Dumont, 2003). The alternative to skilled migration is to implement retraining programs for existing workers. For example, the researcher undertook the accelerated (theory and practice) training on Spitfire and Seafire fighter plane Merlin engine repair and aircraft servicing during World War II. As such, it might be appropriate to plan and implement accelerated specific training as practiced during World War II in order to meet a part of skill shortage urgently.

Within this context the experiences of skilled Sri Lankan migrants in Australia is potentially instructive. Many of the migrants that have been surveyed for this study have skills in areas of skill shortages. If their experiences are that they have faced major difficulties in utilising their skills in industry, due to lack of access to employment and internal promotions then the skilled migrant strategies may be a limited solution to the reported skills shortages.

The industry and occupational profiles of the Australian workforce has changed considerably from the growth era of the manufacturing sector that coincided with large scale immigration in the 1950s to 1979s. The new ‘skilled’ and ‘economic’ migrants must face more complex and diverse employment markets to those faced by earlier migrants. The opportunities provided by large scale manufacturers where

⁴ The Australian April 15, 2005

English language skills were not essential now no longer exist – or at least to some extent.

This study looks at three types of skilled migrants: trades level, technician, and engineers. It therefore provides an opportunity to examine the experience of these workers across the different occupational types or levels. These experiences will be different to those of the researcher who arrived as a skilled migrant during a different economic and social era. Therefore, the research has some potential to provide insights into the potential effectiveness of the new skilled migration program.

1.2 Locating My Own Experience as part of the Research

I have been a Skilled Sri Lankan Migrant arrived in Australia in early 1975 and have designed the research upon the basis of my experience; and have worked intensely with Sri Lankan migrants in a range of roles through advisory and support services, relating to educational, employment, social and cultural areas including involvement with alumni. My experience, observations and recordings have informed the thesis, and they are outlined below:

In Europe-4½ years experience:

I had been working at the British Aircraft Corporation, England at the time of emigrating to Australia, under the skilled category, as (personnel) 'Training Officer'. It was a rare opportunity to have worked in the quality assurance Department writing Inspection Instruction Manuals including those for the supersonic aircraft Concorde. I consider the experience which I gained working as an Administrative Officer at the Examinations Department of the University of London also as very valuable. I served as Radio Broadcaster-in Sinhala language transmitting to Sri Lanka- from BBC London from 1972 to 1974. As part of the Skill Migration Scheme, we were given assisted passage (for me and my family) and had to pay only £10 per person for the Air ticket to Australia. My speciality had been in the vocational education and training field. In 1970, I was on an ILO/UNESCO fellowship under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to follow a postgraduate diploma course in Training Methodology at the ILO Advanced Vocational Education and Training Centre, Turin, Italy. As part of the course I participated in 'In-plant' training in Sweden and the U.K., and studied vocational education and technical training systems

in both the public and private sectors. I submitted a minor thesis titled ‘A Program for training of Engineering Workshop Foremen and Trainers’ in partial fulfilment of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Training Methodology.

In Sri Lanka:

Prior proceeding to Europe in Sri Lanka I undertook secondary education; technical education and training; accelerated training on aero-engines on fighter air-craft spitfire during World War II; post war special engineering apprenticeship and following a part-time mechanical engineering diploma course at the ‘Ceylon Technical College’; served as an engineering workshop leader. I instructed at a trades training school; lectured at a Diploma level- technician training Institute; and authored three textbooks on Metal-work and Engineering Drawing.⁵

- ❖ I set up an apprenticeship training school for a British Company (in Colombo) with a workforce of approximately 1,500 and was in-charge of the training of apprentices and supervisors. I served as a member of the Advisory Board on Technical Education and Training (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) and I was a member of the five-man standing committee to maintain standards of technical education and training and have been involved in planning, setting-up and implementation the education and training of five junior-technical schools under the Ministry in five towns in Sri Lanka.

These experiences have provided me with an extensive knowledge of field and issues that are related to the topic: the experiences of Sri Lankan migrants working in skilled occupations in other countries; technical and vocational education and training, and the skill needs of industry. Throughout the study I have used this knowledge to comment on findings that have been drawn from the literature of the research for this study.

⁵ These books include materials on metal manufacturing process photographs, photographs of engineering hand and machine tools and operations, theoretical explanations including technical drawing exercises that were obtained from England, U.S.A, Russia and from Australia through the relevant High-Commissions and Embassies in Colombo. I was commissioned by the Ministry to compile these books.);

1.2.1 Strategic Change in Workplace Culture leading to Total Quality Management (TQM) at Colombo Commercial Company (Engineers) Ltd., Colombo, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present a brief description of the factors influencing quality of processes and the outcomes in a work environment within which I have gained experience. This experience involved planning, implementing and execution of the workplace education and training programs. This was at Colombo Commercial Company (Engineers) Limited, Colombo (capital of Sri Lanka) which manufactured tea processing machinery, and accessories for local and international market. (Appendix 2A). The workforce was over one thousand five hundred including the five branches operating in tea plantation areas, for the purpose of carrying out maintenance work of tea processing factories situated locally.

The main effort of industrial training in Sri Lanka has by long tradition been borne by the private sector and in the case of skilled manpower has been based on the apprenticeship system (Technical Education Commission, 1963). The importance of ensuring an adequate supply of trained manpower, both to overcome the shortages which have restrained economic expansion since the gaining of independence from Britain, and to meet the increasing demands for training imposed by global technological progress, led to a new pattern of development under the Industrial Development Act of 1956.

The company management found that the skill standards of the workers were deteriorating. In order to counter this deterioration and to keep up with global technological advancement and also to meet the demands for tea machinery the company decided to restructure the old apprenticeship system. This concept was extended to skilled workers in their application of literacy not only in production but also in classes, meetings and other activities which were part of the restructured jobs.

At this stage, I was recruited to face the challenge. My first task was the planning and preparation of the training programs and to set up a training school for which the report submitted by me was approved by the Board of Directors. Although CCC management at that time was mainly concerned with the workplace education

and training, the problem of Vocational Education had to be considered within the context of historical, social, economic and political issues. (Refer to Appendix 2- CCC Training Program)

Historical Aspect

Early Times: The availability in former times of technical personnel at all levels of competence from skilled craftsmen to architects, engineers, town planners, executives and others even to this day is evident in the wide net-work of irrigation systems in Sri Lanka, the monumental public undertakings and the ornate granite edifices of ancient times. It would appear that skilled personnel were employed in large numbers, and their work carried the hallmark of efficient training. There existed effective medical, agricultural, educational, technical and other indigenous systems which reached up to the frontiers of knowledge of those times. (Technical Education Commission Report, 1963).

❖ Training systems in Mediaeval Sri Lanka:

The nature of training of skilled personnel in those various areas is not known. Nor are there any details of the institutions at which vocational/technical education was imparted, especially at the higher levels. It is however clear that in mediaeval Sri Lanka there was, at the craft level, a system of apprenticeship and instruction for craftsmen, artifices, potters, weavers, etc. (Coomaraswamy, 1907).

The crafts were hereditary; sons of craftsmen were trained in their trade as a matter of course, in the workshop itself. They picked their work in easy stages by diligently following the instruction, examples and practices of skilled craftsmen. From the very beginning, the disciple absorbed together technique, tradition and metaphysics. No vocational education of the present and the future can be replaced workplace education and training of the old craftsmen; for current technical/vocational education provides only technique. The relationship between the master and the pupil was of lasting reverence and affection.

❖ Development of Apprenticeship Training During Colonial and Post Independent Era

There existed a type of apprenticeship training set up by the colonial (British) Government in railway workshops, public works department factories and in the private sector companies where tea and rubber machinery manufactured and in the maintenance workshops involving imported machinery. There were two types of apprentices: Trade apprentice and special apprentice under the British colonial system. Eventually, trade apprentice becomes a skilled worker and the special apprentice a foreman, supervisor or a workshop manager. This category was given time off to attend Technical College. After regaining independence from Britain in 1948, and eventually in 1950, the (Government) Public Works Department set up a Basic Technical Training School in order to train apprentices for eighteen months and then transfer them as second year apprentices to all factories which were under government departments.

In 1956 when the Nationalist/Socialist Government was in power, most of the large European companies and tea industry were nationalised. Almost all foreign businessmen had to leave the country during this period. The Government appointed a Commission to investigate and make recommendations for the development of industrial education and training in Sri Lanka. The Commission in its report proposed that a National Apprenticeship Board should also be created to advice on all matters relating to apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training of all Engineering and Technical grades should be undertaken by the Government sector and also reasonable inducement, eg. By way of grants, tax relief, etc. should be offered to the private sector in order to encourage them to participate in the National Scheme (Technical Education commission report, 1963).

❖ Training Scheme Restructure at CCC-1963 to 1972

The Need:

The private sector, particularly the Colombo Commercial Company Engineers Ltd. (a British company) participated in the national training scheme towards the end of 1963, although there existed an apprenticeship scheme since the inception of the

company in 1874. At that time the existing practice of training apprentices on the shopfloor whilst having its advantages, has been found unsatisfactory with modern production requirements. The skilled personnel could spare little time to train apprentices in the various basic skills. In practice the apprentices were left to pick whatever they could by watching other men at work. There was no one to teach them the correct way of handling hand tools, machinery and the use of engineering materials. Hence the need for a training school was apparent at CCC (Engineers) Ltd.

Criteria were set for '*Designing the Training Scheme and its Objectives*'. They were

- To assure the market that products and services were produced by trained hands and minds.
- To increase the individual worker's daily output,
- To assure an adequate supply of skilled workers in relation to production requirements
- To provide the most efficient methods to train tradesmen and shopfloor supervisors to meet present and future needs
- To give the individual worker a greater sense of security in employment,
- To improve employer-employee relations,
- To eliminate the need for close supervision by training tradesmen to use their own initiative, imagination and planning in performing their work.

Cultural and Welfare Activities:

In designing the scheme, competency development (i.e. based on value system which gives primacy to production needs) and image development of the individual were given equal importance. The latter criteria historically have been held to be important in Sri Lanka, and remains so today. This characteristic is important as it is a feature that contrast with technical and vocational training in Australia and may cause or exacerbate culture differences that Sri Lankan workers face in the Australian labour market and workplace.

Execution of the Scheme

During the process of setting up the apprenticeship training school, six highly skilled workers of relevant trades who were close to their retirement were selected and

trained as practical instructors. A fourth year special trade apprentice who had completed studies at a technical school was trained to assist me in conducting theoretical classes. (Appendix 2). In addition to school instruction-sheets and exercises, procedure manuals were developed for learning important processes, introduction to production of machines and safety practices in the shopfloor. Training modules were prepared for each work area of the shopfloor, and systematic integration of practical work modules, class room instruction modules at the Firm's Training School and technical college education (for some grades) were executed.

There was only one incident I experienced in resistance to change. It was from the company's trade union and having met delegates for discussion the issues were resolved successfully.

Education and Training Program:

All categories of apprentices underwent six months full time basic training at the training school. Trade apprentices and special-trade apprentices on completion of their basic training were transferred to the shopfloor. During their practical training in work areas, they were given class room instructions at the school for three hours a week throughout their apprenticeship. (Appendix 2)

Off the Job Classes for Shopfloor Personnel

Existing shopfloor supervisory grades were given class-room instruction in leadership, human relations, instruction communication and supervision supplemented by using audio visual aids in order to improve their quality of supervisory work. I took a great interest of the welfare side of the company and was an appointee (from the executive staff), to the Company Thrift Society set up by the workers. During this period (1965) I joined a workers' delegation as a spokesman to meet the Minister for Housing in order to negotiate a Housing Scheme for workers on Government owned land. The discussion was successful in obtaining the land almost for free and also an easy payment loan to construct the houses.

Work-floor staff and personnel management were extremely co-operative with these changes. The overall approaches were to increase the diversity of work tasks as well as their participation on production work and responsibility of quality output. The implemented changes were instrumental in shaping the attitude required of the workers and expected quality output. It demonstrated that the consideration of historical and cultural influences in the make-up of the training enabled successful change-implementation.

Program success:

The methods of execution of the training programs were highly successful. It was statistically evident that:

For Management, there was

- Reduction of worker absenteeism
- Reduction of labour turnover
- Reduction of workers' accidents
- Reduction in down-time
- Reduction in material waste
- Improved skill levels
- Improved quality of precision work
- Less time required to replace lost skill
- Ready acceptance of new method of work
- Less time needed for production of tea processing machines due to improvement of overall performance
- Improved supervision through better understanding of people
- Overall improvement of total quality in production of machinery

For Apprentices there was:

- Enthusiasm shown in learning practical and theoretically work at the school
- Dedication to work and reverence to their instructors and supervisors
- Earnestness to do practical exercises in making tools, ultimate aim being producing a complete set of tools including a tool box, at the end of six months training

- Happier training environment at the school and better human relations between skilled worker and apprentice in shopfloor
- Confidence in handling work due to learning according to new training techniques
- Competitiveness in gaining points for work excellence in order to win awards
- Instil confidence in transfer from training to production
- Higher demand for trained apprentices in the job market
- Sense of security in future employment

For Shopfloor workers, there was:

- Increased earnings through increased skill
- Improved job satisfaction through ‘trained hands and minds’
- Reduced the need for close supervision through training to use their own initiative, creativity and planning in doing their work
- Increase safety consciousness at work
- Increased confidence in approaching new tasks due to basic multi-skill training
- Less disputes through better understanding of human relations
- Less stress in increasing their daily output through planning, imagination and controlling in performing their work

For shopfloor supervision, there was:

- A reduction in serious human relations problems due to smoother work operations
- Less time spent for close supervision due to workplace education and training undergone by the workers
- Increased time available for planning
- Methodical, “unpanicky” attainment of targets due to planning and higher skill level
- Versatility in the work force, allowing for greater flexibility in the use of labour owing to “multi-skill” training
- Improved instruction communication levels owing to attending “off the job” classes at training school
- Better opportunities for promotion to higher positions

In addition to the large amount of money invested by the firm on capital expenditure, in setting up the school, machines, equipment and staff for the training scheme, a great deal of good will had also contributed to making it the success. The top management was fully convinced about being patient in assessing results, for tangible benefits will not accrue until the system has been established and in operation for sometime. The end result was that the returns on the investment on training scheme far outweighed its initial monetary value. It was satisfying to note that workplace culture had been changed remarkably towards “total improvement” and was not restricted to product quality alone. The contribution of “human and product quality improvement” both has played a greater part in company’s Total Quality Management.

It should be stated that this is an uncritical analysis and that the program was not without its faults. Furthermore, changes in industry and skill needs would make much of the program obsolete today. However, this short narrative is provided to provide an impression of the formalistic training and work environment in Sri Lanka that contrasts with those in Australia.

1.2.2 Some personal experiences

Accelerated Skill Training as Executed During World War II

A hard-headed businessman prepares us for war”, writes D.D. McNicoll. “In WW II 60th Anniversary series (The Australian). Australia was so unprepared for war in 1939 that had it not been for the foresight of one man, our industry might not have made any significant contribution to the war effort... Essington Lewis, the general manager of the mining and steel-production giant BHP, had modernised Australia’s steel making over a decade..... Lewis, controlled the production of all bombs and artillery shells, ammunition, small arms, aircraft, vehicles and all machinery and tools used in their manufacture”, (on a war footing in an emergency situation).

‘War-time Jobs with Peace-Time Prospects’ -

This was the title of a massive poster displayed in 1941 in Sri Lanka, for recruitment of trainees for the Royal Naval Air Service (Fleet-Air-Arm), to be trained as aircraft-engine mechanics, electricians, sheet-metal workers, radio signallers, instrument

makers and other skill technicians required to service aircraft. I was (as a young boy of 15 years of age) excited to read the above poster and eager to grab the opportunity to learn and work on aeroplanes. However, I was already following a one year technical course which was nearing completion. Over one thousand young boys sat for the selection test conducted by the (CBTTC) 'Ceylon Boys Technical Training Corps', the year 1941 to recruit 300 trainees and I was one of the successful boys to be selected. CBTTC had been established under the Department of Public Works in order to provide one year basic training "crash-course", leading to apprenticeships in the hardcore industrial areas, as part of the answer for prevailing skill shortage during World War II period. It was a residential training course being conducted in a camp environment in semi-permanent buildings at Maharagama in the out-skirt of Colombo. The training programme which was very rigid commenced daily from 5.00 a.m. (wake-up time) to 6.00 p.m. Early morning physical training exercise (with a boys band) and after studies, boxing and gymnastics were compulsory. English, Mathematics, Physics, Engineering materials, Engineering (geometrical and mechanical) drawing were the theoretical subjects taught while practical work such as basic machine tool operation (metal) filing and chipping using hammer and chisel with hand tools were instructed. Theoretical subjects were taught at the Ceylon Technical College. Music, drama and sports were included in the curriculum at the training camp. R.N.A.C.T.E (Royal Naval Air-Craft Training Establishment) H.M.S. Monara

Meanwhile, at the end of 1941, the Minister of Transport and Works, Sir John Kotawala and Commander-in-Chief of the (British) Fleet, Sir Geoffrey Clayton visited our training camp and they were highly impressed with the quality of the training. Consequently, a team of British Instructors (Royal Naval and Royal Air Force Servicemen) visited the Training Camp to assess our educational standard with a view to recruit a batch of trainees to be trained in aircraft work. Ultimately some of us were called for interviews by the R.N.A.C.T.E (H.M.S.MONARA). (This training establishment had been functioning as an Aircraft Career (ship) named 'H.M.S. MONARA' situated at Maharagama, a suburb of Colombo) where I was lucky to be selected through a stiff test.

The curriculum which we followed under the accelerated training programme:

- a) During first three months we were given military full battle training using small arms, route marches and parades including field games such as soccer etc. and preliminary lectures pertaining to Royal Naval Aircraft career functions awareness.
- b) From the fourth month lectures and practical work relating to the aircraft commenced:
Aero-dynamics, I.C.E. (Internal Combustion Engines), metallurgy, engineering drawing and technical mathematics were taught as theoretical subjects while dexterity training was provided in the workshop.
- c) Using basic hand tools we had to learn precision metal fitting exercises such as to cut, shape and fit a ¼ inch thick metal ‘male’ square piece into a ‘female’ piece and also to fit a ¼ inch thick metal hexagonal piece in the same way.
- d) We had to undergo only nine months of ‘accelerated’ training which embodied the study of aero-engines during the final two months. Cross-sectional ‘inline’ and ‘radial’ aero-engines were used as visual-aid for instructions.

‘On-the-job’ after nine months of training:

During peacetime a similar training course of that magnitude perhaps would take eighteen months to two years to complete. However, during war-time the same training course seemed to have shrunk into nine months because of the urgent demand of the skills needed to work on aircraft. After completion of our training, we were posted to Royal Naval aircraft workshops (hangers) and airports to repair and service British spitfire fighters fixed with Merlin inline aero-engines and also Pratt & Whitney double-wasp radial aero-engines fitted to American Kossaic fighter planes. We were able to read and understand the engine operational hand-books in order to fit or repair aero-engines in the theatre of war, which was due to knowledge and confidence gained during the accelerated training.

This accelerated training course has been executed at the I.L.O. (International Labour Organisation) International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training –

Turin, Italy. During the training course the participants are kept abreast of the latest pedagogical research findings, and work in close collaboration with the ILO-UNESCO research unit which operates at the Centre. In 1970, I undertook the course on a fellowship awarded by the ILO under the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). The course which I followed was 'Post-graduate Diploma in Training Methodology'.

In Australia-30 years experience:

When I arrived in Australia in January 1975, I kept on applying through newspaper advertisements for vacancies matching my qualifications and experience. Since no favourable responses were received within the first month, I decided to apply for semi-skilled jobs which were not relevant to my experience. I was called for an interview by a major Insurance Company (T&G) for a position of Insurance trainee with a remuneration of \$150 per week and was successful in two interviews I was subsequently called for the final interview by one Mr. R... In the process of questioning me, he asked, "Can you really sell insurance in this country?" I replied, "Yes, I am confident, I will be able to do insurance work." Then, Mr. R.... was silent and after a pause, he said, "I don't think you could sell insurance to Australians". The following is my memory of the dialogue that took place in continuing the interview:

- K : Can I ask a question?
Mr. R : Yes, of course.
K : Why do you think, I can't do field insurance work in this country?
Mr. R : (No reply, kept silent)
K : (Breaking the silence, I asked:) Is it because I am coloured?
Mr. R : Yes.
K : What is the impression of Australians about coloured people here in Australia, Mr. R...?
Mr. R : They think, coloured people are uneducated, smelly, dirty and uncivilised.
K : What is your impression, Mr. R?
Mr. R : I feel the same.
K : Have you visited overseas countries, Mr. R?
Mr. R : No, Karu.
K : I pity your ignorance, Mr. R.; there are uneducated, smelly and dirty people in England where I lived before I migrated, that doesn't mean to say that, all are the same; there, majority are very clean, highly educated

and very intelligent. In Sri Lanka too where I was born and brought up is the same; there are very educated, cultured clean people as well as dirty, smelly, uneducated. I think Mr. R., you should travel to other countries to broaden your outlook.

It was January 1975, and multiculturalism was anew theme in Australian public life, although possibly not in the workplace. The white Australia policy had been abolished in 1974 by the Whitlam Labour Government. Fortunately, that prejudicial incident occurred three decades ago and now people are more informed about other cultures through electronic and print media and through what their children learn in schools. Nevertheless the experience was formative for me, having just arrived in the country, and it has continued to influence my outlook towards the Sri Lankan community. My premise has not been that there are major social prejudices towards migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia. Rather it has been a question of whether the cultural differences, and their expression in the form of language, idiom, and other cultural aspects such as humour, create potential barriers for these people in the Australian labour market.

Since that time I have worked in a wide range of industry and community settings in Australia. These experiences have given me a very wide range of perspectives on the interaction of social and work cultures in the Australian workplace. The two cultures are not the same, and vary across communities and workplaces. When the added variable of migration and non-English speaking backgrounds are added the interactions of social and work cultures becomes very complex. Migrants when they arrive in Australia and seek employment are confronted with this complexity. My life and work in Melbourne have exposed me to countless stories of these interactions told by family, friends, colleagues, and clients. My own experiences and those stories that have come to me have provided the basis for the investigations of this project. They have also informed the project as I feel that the richness and variety of my experiences in working with such a clearly defined community as the Melbourne Sri Lankan community have given a rich inventory of experiences and observations.

An outline of these experiences is as follows:

- ❖ *An Industrial Engineer:* In 1977, joined NABISCO biscuit Company as an Industrial Engineer, and gained experience in improving production machinery and, working with a multicultural workforce.
- ❖ *Defence Department:* From 1979 to 1994 served at Cataloguing Authority of the Australian Defence Department gaining experience with Defence equipment and service personnel.
- ❖ *Activist in the Sri Lankan community.* I have undertaken a wide variety of cultural, developmental, and community support roles within the Sri Lankan community. A list of these experiences is provided in appendix 1

This rich array of experiences within the Melbourne and Australian Sri Lankan community, and in the interaction between these communities and the broader Australian community has given me a broad and deep knowledge of the social and economic life of the community. This has both informed the content of the study and framed its investigation through interviews, focus groups and surveys.

These experiences have been over a long working life panning six decades in Sri Lanka, the UK and Europe. They have spanned a period of enormous historical change and radical changes in industry, employment, skills and work. These changes are not played out in a linear or consistent fashion across nations. The migrant faces the potential shock of abandoning the formative processes of history, and thus these changes can have a different impact. My range of experiences has given me many experiences of these shocks, and thus provides me with a capacity to add narrative based interpretations to the experiences of Sri Lankan migrants in the Australian workplace.

The following Chapter examines the background of Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia.

CHAPTER TWO

SRI LANKAN IMMIGRANTS

2.0 Historical Background- Early Migration of Sri Lankans to Australia

While the substantial formation of Sri Lankan–Australian communities in Australia is a 20th century occurrence, historical links between the two countries go back to previous centuries. *“It is recorded that on the First Fleet which signified the birth of modern Australia on January 26, 1788, there was a sailor from Sri Lanka. So, the links between Sri Lanka and Australia go back to the very birth of the nation”* (A.J. Grassby, 1982- Appendix 3).

The major migration of Sri Lankans to Australia took place after World War II and Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948. There is evidence that long before this period, about the period 1870, Sri Lankans had migrated to Australia mainly for employment. The most significant mass migration was the arrival of over five hundred Singalese (as Sinhalese of Sri Lanka were then called) on the SS Devonshire to Northern Queensland in November 1882 to work on the sugar plantations. According to Sri Lankan researcher, Bandula Endagama (1985), even prior to 1882 Sri Lankans had migrated to Australia. Louis Hope, a leading sugarcane planter of Cleveland (Brisbane) had employed a group of Sri Lankans in 1870 on his Ormiston plantation. Also at the top of Cape York, Cingalese (Sri Lankans) were working in the pearl fisheries in the 1870s and perhaps earlier. Endagama estimates that between 1877 and 1879, a total of seven hundred Cingalese were thus employed. (Weerasooria, 1988).

“The arrival of the Cingalese (in 1882) was labelled an ‘invasion’. The controversy that arose continued to engage the attention of politicians. The press, the Anti-Coolie Leagues and the community generally for several months.... The Planters were soon disappointed with their new employees. Instead of a hard working, experienced and amenable workforce, they found that the Cingalese were not plantation workers but ‘blacksmiths, carpenters, cooks, barbers, house servants ...’.” (Weerasooria, 1988)

These Cingalese workers were all unemployed townsmen fleeing from a period of depression. The editor of the Mackay Mercury at the time, however, found:

“The class of Cingalese who have honoured us with their presence are dangerous (since) there is a great fluency in the use of the English language and a competent knowledge of mental arithmetic. In fact they appear to be intelligent, well trained artisans, whom it is as reasons to restrict to the shovel and the hoe, as it would be to yoke, a high bred and spirited horse to a bullock dray. Some of them were very well educated....”
(Weerasooria, 1988).

❖ **The nature of recent Sri Lankan immigration:**

When examining the nature of immigration in terms of the topic of this research, the following two points are important:

- a) Immigration of mainly English-speaking Sri Lankans has been in the early 70s. These immigrants had been educated in the English-medium in Sri Lanka and were accustomed to the Western way of life more than the next category.
- b) Immigration of bilingual, bicultural Sinhalese-Buddhist, Tamil-Hindu, and Muslim, Sri Lankans took place in the late 70s, 80s and 90s. These immigrants were mainly educated in Sinhala or Tamil medium and later obtained a working knowledge of the English language with professional qualifications in various fields. (Liyanaratchi and Gamage, 1998)

(See Appendix 3 regarding a Sri Lankan immigrant who joins the First Fleet with Captain Phillip.)

2.1 Background Data

2.1.1 The Sri Lanka Born Community and Historical Background

The island of Sri Lanka lies to the south of the Indian subcontinent. The island has long been inhabited by two main cultural groups, the majority Sinhalese (Buddhists from the south) and, minority Tamils (Hindus from the north).

In the late 19th century, the first Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia were recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland. There are reports of Sri Lankans working in the gold-mining fields in New South Wales and as pearlers in Broome, Western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia.

Following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948 and the political ascendancy of the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese, minority groups such as the Tamils and the Burghers (people of Portuguese, Dutch and English descent) felt threatened and began emigrating abroad. During the 1960s, Burghers comprised the largest number of Sri Lanka-born migrants to Australia. Following changes to Government policies in the early 1970s, Asian migrants were admitted to Australia. Many of the Sri Lanka-born migrants included Sinhalese, Tamils as well as Burghers. By 1986, there were 22,519 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia.

In the following decade, the number of Sri Lankans entering Australia increased. Many were fleeing the conflict in Sri Lanka between Tamil separatists and Sinhalese. Most of them arrived as humanitarian entrants under the Special Assistance Category (SAC) Class 215, introduced by the Australian Government in 1995. Additionally, there was also significant migration of Sinhalese and Tamils from Sri Lanka under the Family Migration Program, the Onshore Protection Program, and the Skilled Migration Program (mainly in the Independent Category).

The majority of Sri Lankans reside in Victoria and New South Wales. They are generally majority middle class, well educated, fluent in English and readily employable. Many of the Burghers had enjoyed high social and professional positions

in Colombo. Some of the most recent newcomers, however, are less English educated, less affluent and from rural areas.

❖ **The Community Today**

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2001 recorded 53,610 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia, an increase of 14 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 26,670 followed by New South Wales (16,910), Queensland (3,990) and Western Australia (2,970).

Age and Sex

The median age of the Sri Lanka born in 2001 was 41.6 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas-born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed: 6.9 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 12.4 per cent were 15- 24 years, 39.2 per cent were 25- 44 years, 30.5 per cent were 45- 64 years and 11.1 per cent were 65 and over. Of the Sri Lanka-born in Australia, there were 27,100 males (50.5 per cent) and 26,510 females (49.5 per cent). The sex ratio was 102.2 males per 100 females.

Qualifications

In 2001, of Sri Lanka-born people aged 15 years and over, 57.1 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Among the Sri Lanka born, 37.2 per cent had higher qualifications⁶ and 10.3 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. Of the Sri Lanka-born with no qualifications, 24.9 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

Employment

Among Sri Lanka-born people age 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 67.5 per cent and the unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 63.0 and 7.4 per cent

⁶ Higher qualification includes Postgraduate Degree, Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate and Bachelor Degree, Advanced Diploma & Diploma Level.

respectively. Of the 30,500 Sri Lanka-born who were employed, 51.7 per cent were employed in a skilled occupation, 30.8 per cent in Semi-Skilled and 17.4 per cent in Unskilled. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 52.6, 28.9 and 18.6 per cent respectively.

(Source: *DIMIA-Community Information*, date 3rd January 2005, http://www13.brinkster.com/tormel/sl_comm/sl_comm.html)

2.1.2 Australian Overseas Qualifications Assessment System

The researcher has had a long experience in dealing with Sri Lankan migrants and the processes for the recognition of overseas qualifications. The discussion below is based upon observations gained through this experience.

The recognition of overseas qualifications is at three levels:

- the official level through the NOOSR processes;
- through professional associations; and
- the informal level by employers.

The impact of these recognition behaviours obviously is most acute at the level of the employer. This study is focussed upon this level, as it is at this level that the individual experience the direct rewards of having their qualifications recognised, or face the frustrations of not having them recognised, or of them being disregarded as unimportant. Nevertheless, the formal recognition system does play a role in the processes of employment and job promotion and therefore should be briefly explored.

Australia has a very complex and elaborate system of overseas qualifications assessment. Often newly arrived migrants are not aware of the importance of these assessments in achieving their career success. Sometimes, new migrants have been given unrealistic picture of the importance of academic assessment of overseas qualifications with no regards to labour market realities. Therefore, this aims to provide a general overview of educational assessment of overseas tertiary and professional qualifications.

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) is responsible for the development of Australian Government policy on overseas skills recognition. NOOSR is part of Australian Government International Education Network. It is part of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). NOOSR works closely with the State and Territory qualifications assessment authorities. NOOSR assess your overseas qualification based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). NOOSR assessments provide a general recognition of your overseas qualification according to comparable AQF qualifications. It does not compare qualifications at competency standards level nor at subject or discipline level. NOOSR assessment can be useful for entering tertiary education in Australia and for general employment purposes. However, too much of importance should not be placed on these assessments for the purpose of gaining employment. Recognition of qualifications by professional industry bodies is much more important in the labour market.

People who need to assess your overseas academic qualifications should contact the Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) in their state or territory. The OQUs are based on a series of NOOSR publications known as Country Education Profiles. CEPs list profile educational qualifications of over 100 countries. It provides guidelines on the comparability of qualifications from these countries to Australian qualifications.

There is a large number of industry based professional organisations and assessment authorities that conduct assessment of overseas skills and qualifications. These assessing authorities determine whether overseas qualifications and skills are suitable to be recognised for the purpose of employment as a professional in Australia such as an accountant or engineer. Many newly arrived migrants question the fairness of some of these assessments. Some regard these assessing bodies as professional monopolies that do not support any sort of competition from overseas trained professional. However, there are many migrants who have successfully attained professional status in their field of expertise after many sacrifices. Therefore, you need to be determined to overcome these systematic barriers to attain career goals.

The following are some of the professional assessing authorities in different fields that can be approached for a professional assessment:

- ❖ Accountancy: Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Australia, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA) and National Institute of Accountants (NIA)
- ❖ Architecture: Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA)
- ❖ Dentistry: Australian Dental Council (ADC)
- ❖ Dietetics: Dieticians Association of Australia (DAA)
- ❖ Engineering: Institution of Engineers, Australia
- ❖ Information and Communication Technologies: Australian Computer Society
- ❖ Medicine: Australian Medical Council (AMC)
- ❖ Nursing: Australian Nursing Council (ANC)
- ❖ Optometry: Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ)
- ❖ Pharmacy: Australian Pharmacy Examination Council (APEC)
- ❖ Psychology: Australian Psychological Society (APS)
- ❖ Quantity Surveying: Australian Institute of Quantity Surveying (AIQS)
- ❖ Social Work: Australian Association of Social Work (AASW)
- ❖ Welfare Workers: Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW)
- ❖ Teaching: National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR)
- ❖ Translation and Interpreting: National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)
- ❖ Veterinary Science: Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC)

In the face of strict, adverse, seemingly unreasonable or discriminatory assessment requirements an applicant may become dispirited and limit their employment and career objectives. The researcher has witnessed this on occasions with applicants. On the whole, however, those migrants who have shown determination and invested in careful planning have overcome the difficulties in overseas skills assessment.

(Source: PAHANA Sri Lankan Magazine- Melbourne, written by the Manager- Employment & Training at the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre, August 2005)

2.1.2 (A) Assessing the skills of migrants:

The current system for assessing the skills of people wishing to migrate to Australia is being reviewed by federal parliament's Migration Committee. There were two days of public hearings in Sydney and Melbourne for the Committee's inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing.

The Sydney hearing held on Wednesday, 23rd November 2005, from 8.30 am to 3.45 pm in the City Circle Room at the Mercure Hotel, 818-820 George Street. The Melbourne hearing held on Thursday, 24 November from 8.30am to 4.40 pm in the K Room, Parliament House, Spring Street. The committee was to hear from representatives of state governments, industry bodies, service providers and unions. (The Australian, 2005)

The adjoining Chapter Three would describe education and training system in Sri Lanka. All Sri Lankan skilled migrants to Australia are products of this system.

This chapter has provided a brief picture of the characteristics and some of the experiences of the Sri Lankan born community in Australia. These characteristics interact with both institutional forms, such as skills recognition systems, and the cultural forms of the Australian labour market. This study concentrates upon these interactions, which are explored in particular through the experiences of a group of immigrants who agreed to participate in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

SKILLS TRAINING IN SRI LANKA

3.0 Sri Lanka – education and training

Sri Lanka is an island (smaller than Tasmania in land area) less than 30 kilo metres off the south-east coast of Indian Sub Continent, with a population of 17.9 million in 1994 (Annual Report of Central Bank of Sri Lanka). It has a tropical climate and is generally lush and fertile, though with some fairly arid areas in the North. It has predominantly agriculturally based economy, producing tea, coconut, rubber and rice, but textiles and tourism are also equally important. The history of Sri Lanka was dominated by foreign powers for nearly four and a half centuries, with successive rule by the Portuguese (1550-1658), Dutch (1658-1796) and British (1796-1948). The British had a major impact on Sri Lankan education, with all university tuition conducted in English until the 1960s. It is still an important language for tertiary education.

The aim of this chapter is to review Sri Lanka's developments in the 1990s and 2000s relating to its educational policies at school level and post-school level, and discuss the extent to which, and the ways in which these policies have been affected by the process of globalisation.

The chapter has two sections. This first section looks in broad terms at the general orientation, quality and outcomes of the education system. All Sri Lankan skilled migrants to Australia are products of this system. Therefore, their experiences in Australia including their access to and experiences in the paid workforce will be influenced by the skills and wherewithal that are gained from their time in education in Sri Lanka. To an extent the migrants who are the subjects for this research have had common experiences of this general education system – although as indicated the school system in Sri Lanka contains different elements of government and religious schools that are of varying quality.

The second section describes the vocational training system in Sri Lanka. The subjects for this research also have participated in different elements of this system. As indicated above, the subjects are divided into engineers, technicians and craftsmen who have participated in degree level, diploma level, and certificate level courses, respectively.

3.1 Education and Training System in Sri Lanka

Many Sri Lankan skilled migrants have been trained through training systems that were designed and developed several decades ago (Siriwardene, 2003). This system, typical of similar vocational training systems in many developing countries has largely been based upon European (British) industrial models of the pre and immediate post Second World War periods. It is likely, therefore that a high proportion of Sri Lankan skilled immigrants in Australia will be disadvantaged by globalisation processes.

According to critics Sri Lanka's education system is obsolete. This country follows the British colonial academic model, stresses academic excellence in a limited and highly competitive market. *"The great difference between the Sri Lankans and Japanese or German model is that the focus is on academics, while they provide training and security for the average student, schools in Sri Lanka are tiny microcosms of the large society, steeped in internal and external politics, political appointments and dismissals. What is taught is survival by intrigue, rather than excellence"* (Lanka Monthly Digest, June 1997).

This chapter examines the pre-colonial era, post-colonial system of education, traditions and culture of people that have moulded the student population. It looks at the educational policies and how far the educational system has been effective in matching graduates with employment.

3.1.1 Historical Aspect of Education, Traditions and Culture of the People of Sri Lanka

Historical research is useful so that past mistakes are not repeated and it helps, in our understanding of present situations. In addition this type of research has the potential to provide a foundation for a sound education and training system. In a study's rationale it is important to find a chain of reasoning that systematically and logically relates to a set of antecedent conditions to a set of desired outcomes (Mosenthal, 1988)

This study is mainly concerned with Sri Lanka's recent developments in the 1990s relating to its educational policies at post-school level, and extent to which, and the ways in which these policies have been affected by the process of globalisation. Nevertheless the issues of education have been considered within the context of historical, cultural, economic and political perspectives. In order to evaluate the present and foresee the future it is necessary to retrace the historical pattern. Therefore, the historical study approach has been employed by reviewing of relevant documents including journals, papers, archive investigation and general bibliographic survey, relating to education.

3.2 History and description of Sri Lanka in brief

Glimpse into History

In the Third Century BC, Anuradhapura, the capital of Sri Lanka was one of the greatest cities of the world. Today its ruins are of monumental rare beauty that rivals the mighty pyramids of Egypt. The availability in former times of academic and technical people of all levels of competence from skilled craftsmen to architects, engineers, town planners, designers executives and others even to this day is evident in the wide net-work of irrigation systems in Sri Lanka, the monumental public undertakings and the ornate granite edifices of ancient times. There existed effective medical, agricultural, educational, technical and other indigenous systems which reached up to the frontiers of knowledge of those times (Technical Education Commission Report, 1963).

Recorded history (*Mahavamsa the 'great chronicle'*) emerges from some time after the advent of Sinhalese, apparently before the 5th Century BC, North Indian people of Aryan ancestry. Different religious and ethnic groups lived side by side in a democratic society. Although not a formally democratic government, and “under the normal circumstances the heir succeeded to the throne, *“in theory the sovereign was elected by the people, and the tradition of the right to choose or approve of the prince nominated to succeed appears to have survived even the tyrannies established by the last occupants of the throne.”* (Healey, 1997) Further evidence of democratic forms can be found in Ariyapala (1956) and Mendis (1998). In more recent times some areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the Island were in a state of terrorist attacks due to the revolt by the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam” and their demand for a separate Tamil State, and the counter measures of the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan army. However, at the time of writing (in mid 2005) both parties have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in search of a political solution seeking to restore peace.

3.3 Historical background of Education

Both British colonial education and the pre-colonial Buddhist schools have contributed distinctive elements to present-day Sri Lankan Education. The first schools in Sri Lanka were Buddhist, ranging from *Gurugedera* or village schools to *Prirvenas* or centres of higher learning (Australian Heritage Projects and Narangoda, 1992).

Colonisation and cultural characteristics of the people have played a prominent part in shaping the trend of education in Sri Lanka. The models taken over from colonial masters were no doubt modified by local traditions, prevailing political attitudes and current western influences.

In Ceylon (Sri Lanka) an agreement was reached (by the British) with the King of Kandy (after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom, an agreement was reached with the Kandyan Chiefs) in 1815 designed to protect Buddhism from the threat of Christianity. In all these territories there were three communities who took advantage

of the *missions schools* the Ibos in Nigeria, the Copts in Egypt and the Tamils in Ceylon. As a result of this system there was a disproportionately high number with a Western European- type education. When these and similar territories became independent the advantages of education and the administrative power enjoyed by minority groups gave rise to serious political conflict. (*Brian Holmes (Ed) Educational Policy and Mission Schools. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1967*)

When Sri Lanka regained independence from the British in 1948, eventually the successive Governments attempted to redress the anomalies of the majority community Sinhalese. (*Sinhalese make up 74% of the national population with the Tamils representing 18%*). The Tamil population is concentrated in the north and east of the island although a fair proportion of them are scattered throughout the country, engaged in various fields of work, professions and businesses. Tamils in the Northern Province who took advantage of the Mission schools, and have traditionally been very successful in the secondary and tertiary education system, caused a relatively unbalanced and disproportionately large numbers in the professions and government service. This situation has created much bitterness among other ethnic groups, particularly within the majority Sinhalese population. As mentioned earlier, this has led to some discriminatory Government measures being implemented in order to reduce disparities in respect of education and employment.

The Tamils who had been enjoying a privileged position under the colonial rule began to lose their favoured treatment when the Government took counter measures to dismantle the disparities. Consequently resentment has been aroused among Tamils and their politicians have campaigned against the government. An extreme segment of youth went a step further: they sought to wrest political power by force, violence and terrorism taking up arms against the Government, and Sri Lanka was virtually engaged in a state of civil war due to the uprising by the ‘Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam’ and their demand for a separate Tamil State carved out of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. It is pacifying to note that currently (at the time of writing the thesis) both parties have ceased fighting in order to search for a political solution.

There is a case to be made that ethnic conflicts may have erupted in any case, rather than locate the cause in the colonial discrimination or favouritism of mission school education towards the Tamil community in the Northern Province; and the consequent denial of that privilege after regaining independence as stated earlier. Many other factors, such as: caste oppression, historical aspect, and dominative oppression by the majority community also are factors that need to be taken into account.

It is not relevant to elaborate on the ethnic issue as it has not directly related to the aim of this project. Nevertheless it would be beneficial perhaps to examine this issue briefly so that some understanding could emerge in reflecting the ways in which educational policies have been affected by the process of globalisation.

Historically, according to 'The Mahavansa' (*The Great Chronicle of Ceylon, 1950*) there had been invasions from South India over centuries ago and wars have erupted between Sinhalese and Tamils. It is recorded that South Indian Dravidians (*Tamils*) have captured some northern parts of the island and have ruled those areas during certain periods. Eventually, Sinhalese have re-captured those areas and have established power throughout the island. (Mahavansa, English translation, 1912 and 1950) Wilhelm Geiger, Chapter 25, pp.170-178). Although the two communities have lived later in harmony bitterness has prevailed within them and this conception continued from generation to generation.

It would have been a possibility that after the regaining of independence, the majority Sinhalese who are conscious of the past history would be likely to dominate and oppress Tamils in the fields of education, employment, land rights etc. Presumably, such oppression could have been a major factor in antagonising the minority community and thus inflaming an uprising by the minority Tamils.

Caste oppression could be another contributing factor, especially among "lower" caste Tamil youth. Most of the Tamil political leaders of the post independent era belonged to high caste Vellalars and joined the main established political parties that ruled the country. Lower caste people were debarred from attending their temples, and using the same wells. Such discriminatory attitudes were common

between high caste and lower caste Tamil communities in the northern part of the island. Consequently, the youth aspirations within these communities were not met. High unemployment, discriminatory attitudes regarding access to and investment in the education system, and oppression by the high caste are factors that caused frustration among the majority of Tamil youth.

With regard to the Northern rebellion representations were made that pointed to the caste factor in the causes of the mobilisation as well as in the leadership of youth movements. It was pointed out that the first militant movement in the North was that which mobilised against caste oppression - the LTTE (*Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*). Despite the fact that many of its leaders were drawn from the *Karaiar* caste, it had the respect of the Vellalars since the Karairars were an intermediary caste. However, from the evidence placed before it, the Presidential Commission was satisfied that caste has played a contributory role in contemporary youth unrest. “*We are convinced that certain castes still suffer from a great deal of social and political oppression and tend to remain in pockets or enclaves. Rebellion comes easy to the youth who are often victims of this discrimination.*” (Presidential Commission on Youth, 1990)

It is evident that the colonial influence of the mission school European type education enjoyed by Tamils and subsequent Government measures to redress anomalies as perceived by the major community Sinhalese, combined with other historical aspects of caste oppression and domination by the majority Sinhalese have given rise to a serious ethnic conflict.

In order to appreciate the meaning and significance of recent trends and controversies in education due to certain Government policies and also in consideration of globalisation, it is necessary to examine the cultural values of the Sri Lankan students and teachers.

3.3.1 Schooling

Under the Sri Lankan constitution of 1978 every citizen has a right of free education, which is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 14. Sri Lanka has a literacy

rate of 90.5% for males and 82.5% for females, one of the highest in Asia. More than 90% of children over the age 5 attend school. However, some children from urban shanty districts or remote rural areas received no schooling.

❖ **Primary**

‘The language of instruction in Primary and Secondary schools is either Sinhala or Tamil, with English taught as a second language from Year 3. Free books are available to all students from Kindergarten to Year 11. Primary schools have an integrated curriculum based around the acquisition of basic, language and numerical skills.

❖ **Junior Secondary Schools Curriculum and Life Skills**

The junior secondary school curriculum has a common core of nine subjects: first language (Sinhala or Tamil), Religion, Mathematics, English, Science, Social studies, Aesthetic studies, Life skills and Health, and Physical Education. Life-skills is a new subject which has replaced technical subjects in the curriculum, and is designed to teach certain pre-vocational and domestic skills. It is also seen as an activity-based subject to benefit the non-academically gifted child’.

❖ **Senior Secondary School Curriculum and Technical Subjects**

The Senior Secondary Curriculum is essentially the same as that just described, but with Life skills has been replaced by technical subjects such as Wood work, Metal work, Agriculture and Home science. At the end of Senior Secondary Schools students sit for the GCE ‘O’ Level examination. Eight subjects are taken in this examination. Students who wish to go on to pre-university studies (GCE ‘A’ Level) must pass six subjects with three credits. (DEET, 1992)

3.4 Technical and Vocational Education

‘There are 22 technical institutes in Sri Lanka; eight of them are Poly Technical Institutes offering Craft and Diplomas; and 14 are Junior Technical Institutes, offering craft (trade level) courses only. There are also five Technical Units (mobile) which offer training courses to meet the needs of particular localities. All are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education. The Universities of

Moratuwa and Peradeniya also offer some technical courses. The various institutes offer three types of awards:

Higher National Diploma Courses (HND)

National Diploma in Technology (NDT)

The National Certificate in Technology

(DEET, 1992)

3.5 Government Expenditure on Education

The Government spent Rupees fourteen million (approved estimates for 2005) of its total expenditure on education in 2005. This is a 46% increase from nine million (approved estimates for 2004) of its total expenditure on education in the previous year. Details of expenditure as shown below:

Table 1: Government Expenditure on Education

Item	Functional Classification of Expenditure			Rs. Million
	2003	2004	2004	2005
		Approved	Prov	Approved
General public services	86,361	89,536	95,443	114,662
Civil administration	24,755	22,738	23,196	31,384
Defence	47,005	51,978	56,341	62,788
Public order and safety	14,601	14,820	15,906	20,490
Social services	104,812	107,771	138,820	145,545
Education	31,673	32,341	33,792	49,288
Health	22,073	21,871	25,919	27,118
Welfare	45,849	48,505	73,571	61,456
Community services	5,217	5,054	5,538	7,683
Economic services	14,417	19,900	22,100	24,841
Other	129,104	140,467	133,315	134,840
Total current expenditure	334,693	357,674	389,678	418,988
Capital expenditure and lending				
General public services	5,203	7,138	7,191	7,208
Civil administration	4,826	5,908	5,986	5,506
Public order and safety	377	1,230	1,205	1,702
Social services	19,189	28,101	28,996	38,320
Education	7,443	9,610	8,548	14,072
Health	5,403	7,755	8,500	12,518
Welfare	841	538	454	218
Housing	3,249	4,175	6,796	3,247
Community services	2,254	6,023	4,698	8,265
Economic services	58,742	72,066	61,271	98,614
Other	4,276	223	173	298
Total capital expenditure and lending	87,409	107,528	97,631	144,440

(Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report- 2004, Chapter 6- pp. 111)

3.6 Cultural Traits and Values

As mentioned earlier, the first schools in Sri Lanka were Buddhist, ranging from *Gurugedera* or village school to *Pirivena* or Institute of Higher Learning. The teachers had been the Buddhist monks and the tradition was to venerate the teachers – the pupil used to ‘worship at the feet’ of the teacher. This practice still prevails in certain schools in Sri Lanka.

According to Sri Lanka culture, youth should respect and revere elders, teachers and supervisors and higher-ups (in a work place). That cultural trait, is seen by some foreigners as ‘fear’ in pupils or subordinates. A subordinate or a pupil will never look straight into the eyes of a superior or a teacher because it is considered as disrespectful. When a teacher or a superior comes to inquire or to check on something from a pupil/subordinate if he/she was seated, then he/she would automatically ‘spring-up’ from the seat as a mark of respect.

An American Peace Corp Volunteer noted that the pace in Sri Lanka is slow, everything moves slowly, and rarely rush things depending on a situation. This relaxed attitude can be seen in the streets where people walk at a leisurely pace, and at a bank where the clerk is slowly checking the files for your account balance and then leaving the information on another desk for someone else to type. Such a slow pace may cause frustration at times, but looking from another angle it makes sense due to the tropical climate. The best thing to do is to plan ahead and leave plenty of time for what you need to do. Rushing around or getting angry is not going to speed things up in Sri Lanka. (Gunawardena, C., 1991).

As in most countries the pace and style of work in Sri Lanka undoubtedly is changing under the impact of globalisation. However, having visited Sri Lanka for an extensive period in 2003 I observed that little had changed. For example the style and pace of work in the banks in the state sector was unchanged and only marginally changed in the private sector.

3.6.1 Higher Education and Traditions

The university system of Sri Lanka was designed on the British model and, according to local critics it remains frozen where Britain was three decades ago. The curriculum is bookish and much of this teaching is talk and chalk.

(Don Anderson was inaugural chairman of the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching. He has visiting appointments at the ANU and Southern Cross University) (Anderson, 1996)

The Education Commission (1996) says school pupils mostly memorise facts and solutions given out by the teacher. This learning habit persists at university, with students depending almost entirely on the lecture notes. Cramming for A levels (*University Entrance*) has left many students hooked on rote learning and with a reverence for lecture notes. Don Anderson says “our guide on a tour of universities, a young lecturer in management and economics told me he refuses to dictate lecture notes and forces his students to discuss things. For his pains he earns some low feedback ratings”.

In schools and universities changes and reforms should be attempted gradually, well planned with the provision of resources or else, the education system will suffer from ‘culture shock’ leaving learning and teaching in the lurch. For implementing reforms, massive funding is needed in order to facilitate modern resources and teacher development. The question is, could Sri Lanka afford these funds at a time when a war is going on against the LTTE rebels, and where 21 per cent of government expenditure or 5 per cent of gross domestic product is sucked into the conflict between Tamil Tiger rebels and the government forces. (*Source: Central bank Annual Report 1996*)

Don Anderson says,

“Sri Lankan students are a pretty lively lot. This month a southern university was closed because of a political fight, not between ethnic groups but ideological factions. Last year the University of Peradeniya at Kandy was closed by students for a bit, not because of any ethnic or political conflict but in response to disciplinary action for ragging, the sort of thing known at the Australian Defence Forces Academy as bastardisation”.

3.6.2 Loss of Values in the Transition to Modernity due to Global Developments

There is a perception of a crisis of values in higher education in Sri Lanka. “The crisis of values is a product of an interregnum, where past is attempting to meet the future and where tradition is being challenged but there are no cultural values being cultivated to fill the void. As a well-known political scientist put it, this type of interregnum always creates morbid symptoms and society gradually begins to lose its moral anchor.”

“The trauma of transition is made all the more acute because of Western influence, industrialisation and global developments. Many people who came before us felt that Sri Lanka was extremely vulnerable to Western intrusions and that in recent years we have managed to incorporate the worst aspect of Western society those which even enlightened Westerners reject as dehumanising and vapid”. (Presidential Commission on Youth, 1990)

Sri Lanka’s traditional system founded on the basis of “respect” as its central feature. This respect was often coupled with a sense of “shame” a shame that prevented people from committing acts which violated public standards, especially if these acts were in the pursuit of self- interest. This respect and shame was cultivated in Sri Lankan religious education, general education system, traditional labour systems and especially in the family. It made the social fabric together. It made life systematic to the community and prevented alienation and isolation of which some are the major psychological causes of present day youth unrest.

But it would be wrong in assuming that such a system was always ideal. It was not encouraged for consideration of democracy or equity. Respect was often an inherent trait or social origin and there were very few avenues for social interactions. Stratifications in traditional society were often the other side of the system of respect. Shame was often a tool “to keep people in their place” and to create inferiority

complexes within them and used against the most vulnerable sections of the society, consisting of some castes and the poor.

In addition to the concepts of democracy, equity or equalitarianism, the West brought with it many negative values including a ‘narcotic enjoyment culture’. These values were often in stark contrast to traditional values of respect and community living which had guided Sri Lankan society. In recent times a fair percentage of Sri Lankan youth have been forced to live in isolation which has ultimately led to an erosion of values and thereby resorting to immoral behaviour.

This brief discussion on the values background of Sri Lankan education is important as it provides some indications of the factors that influence the values and behaviours of Sri Lankan migrants. Respect for ‘superiors’, the importance of rote learning, hierarchies – both social and knowledge, are products both of traditional Sri Lankan culture and of an education system that combines this culture and imported British traditions.

3.6.3 The Process of Globalisation

“It can be said that internationalisation of education is inevitable, as the advancement of knowledge and understanding is a global enterprise that has no borders.....Even students who never leave their own country are affected by the impact of our globalised society and economy. Institutions of higher education have the opportunity and responsibility, through teaching and research to increase awareness and understanding of the new and changing phenomena that affect the political, economic and cultural/multicultural developments within and among nations” (Knight and de Wit, 1995, Knight, Jane & de Wit Hans 1995) Strategies for Internationalisation of Higher Education, Section 1.2.3)

Only the rich in Sri Lanka could afford to send their children for higher education abroad and this is tiny minority of the country. However, there are numerous types of scholarship and fellowship plans, such as Colombo Plan, World Nuclear Development Programme (WNDP), AUS AID, United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), etc. offered by many countries to under developed and developing countries, through which even the rural students of high achievement got the opportunity to study abroad.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 1994 on education (above) indicates a marked increase in expenditure and allocated funds from 1990 to 1994, for facilitating and developing the educational sphere.

In 1995 there were 380,000 students who sat the advanced level/University Entrance examination. Of these only 2% could be admitted to the 10 universities although about 40,000 were found eligible on marks. While about 30% may have found admissions to the professional and other tertiary institutions, about 150,000 are drop-outs. They are in a poor position after completing 13 years of schooling and have the only option to enter the world of work.

Of the 500,000 students who completed 11 years of academic education and who sat the GCE (ordinary level) examination- about 80,000 passed in the required 6 to 8 subjects and were eligible to enter the advanced level (12 and 13 years) grades; while about 200,000 remained job-seekers.

Nearly 350,000 youth enter the labour market annually; unfortunately the supply of job seekers far exceeded the demand for employees. In addition there were about 10,000 graduates passing out of the universities annually adding to the large number of degree holders still jobless due to lack of sufficient openings for the academically qualified. The public and private sectors could not accommodate these youth; some of the main reasons given for non employment of these youth were reflected in the shortcomings reflected in:

“...not well motivated and trained for responsible work, do not show keenness to do hard work and to soil their hands, no direct application of their theoretical knowledge to work in productive commercial life situations, incapability in doing manual/practical work, work-experience in job/work attitudes and above all human value/behaviour being in question”.

(Source: George Mendis, Focus on Youth-The Transition from the School, University to the world of work. The Island February 27, 1997)

It is obvious that the broader Sri Lankan education system has major weakness. Many thousands of youth have no pathways when they leave education, aimless and bewildered. Hence there is the call for a well-planned results-oriented scheme. Within this context there is a heavy pressure upon graduates to seek work beyond the domestic labour market, and this is especially the case for the more highly educated graduates. Over the past decade the international economy has been strong. So the opportunity for skilled migration also has been strong. Thus the global economy is creating a global market for skilled labour. Within this context there are pressures upon countries like Sri Lanka to better align their education systems with the internationalisation of skills.

3.6.4 Analytical Comments

Despite the provision of 2.6 per cent (average) of G.D.P. on education, the available evidence clearly suggests that the quality of general education has been deteriorating over the years. Despite fifty years of free education with a generous subsidy package covering free uniforms, free text books and subsidised transport, the prevailing situation is alarming and clearly emphasises the need to improve the quality of education.

According to Central Bank Annual 1996 report, in 1995, the total number of students admitted to the university was only 2 per cent of the relevant age group, about 17 per cent of the total eligible students and 7 per cent of the total number who sat for the Advanced Level (Uni. Entrance) examination. This reflects that the access to university education in Sri Lanka for those in the relevant age group is extremely limited when *compared with other south East Asian countries such as Singapore (8 per cent) and Malaysia (7 per cent)*. However, the need for further expansion of higher education should be reviewed carefully, giving serious consideration to the need for matching formal education with the growing needs of the economy in a more globalised market.

“According to critics, the worst affected by the ‘reforms’ of the past were the poor, who needed advancement through education. The removal of English effectively disfranchised our entire generation- now two entire generations. The beneficiaries of that action have been the upper middle class and the Colombo elite. Their children learned English at home, and it is they who today man the top jobs in industry and enterprise. The village child, at whom the reform was aimed in the first place was in a worse position- more disadvantaged than before”.

Online Edition of Daily News, Friday 27 September 2002: Sri Lankan education experience, a mistake- by Ravi Ladduwahetty
(<http://www.dailynews.lk/2002/09/27/new16.html>)

The Sri Lankan experience shows that primary and secondary education directed towards academic knowledge alone was a mistake, as the Finance Minister K.N. Choksy told the Commonwealth Finance Ministers’ parley in London on Wednesday (26 September 2002). Minister Choksy said:

“The Sri Lankan experience shows that primary and secondary education directed toward academic knowledge alone is a mistake. It results in all youth clamouring for white collar employment. The Sri Lankan experiences show that education overflow of the educated and trained youth seek employment overseas. They would succeed in migrating to certain foreign countries, as skilled migrants”.

A certain proportion of these graduates migrate to Australia after matching their educational and training qualifications as equivalent to Australian counterparts. They even pass an English work language test. Nevertheless, most of them are unable to communicate in English upon arrival in Australia. Often they need an interpreter at various tribunals in courts and medical interviews. The author has been an interpreter for them in many occasions. The reason being, the English pronunciation of Sri Lankans are very different to the Australian accent. Thereby, they are unable to comprehend during these circumstances.

In the context of globalisation, English is a passport to employment. Evidence shows that children from English speaking homes with ‘O’ levels (GCE Ordinary Level) find it easier to get good jobs in the private sector than graduates from

universities run by the government. (Presidential Commission on Youth,1990) A degree never has been a guarantee of a job even in the Government sector. Undoubtedly, foreign investors and their managers would prefer well spoken, motivated, efficient, western-oriented graduates to man their top jobs.

It is evident that some of the Sri Lankan schools which survived the reforms of the late 1950s and 1960s are prospering. Their quality of learning and teaching is high and their past pupils contribute to their development. Several of these schools are run by the Christian Church excepting a few of independent private schools such as – Musaeus.

There has been a continuous and deep level of criticism of the quality and relevance of the Sri Lankan education system for over a decade. Sweeping changes have been proposed by the education commission 1996, and the Minister for Education and Higher Education Hon. Richard Pathirana proclaimed “1997 to be Sri Lanka’s year of Educational Reforms and restructure”, with a wide range of initiatives for rigour. (‘The Island’, August 17, 1997). Yet the problems appear to persist.

For example, in an interview with the Sri Lankan Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Hon. S B Dissanayake when he visited Melbourne on 17 September 1997 he confirmed the deteriorating condition of the existing education system saying:

“There is book work, book work, and more book work. Then there are reams of homework to get through for the next day, and endless memorising of page upon page of irrelevant information. So, there is hardly a moment’s breathing space, let alone time for sports or leisure, or for the arts, or even to read a book. Private tuition has become both a mania and a fad” (notes taken during the interview).

As both the World Bank (Robinson, 2005), the OECD (2001) and UNESCO (Delors, 1998) argue general education is the foundation for both economies and for individual pathways into and success within employment. The deep and abiding weaknesses in the Sri Lankan education system therefore are likely to have caused significant problems for skilled Sri Lankan migrants in the Australian labour market. The weaknesses that graduates typically will carry are those related to English language

skills, cultural and behavioural differences, and generic skills related to problem solving. The second question is does the Sri Lankan vocational education and training system help to ameliorate these difficulties?

3.7 Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Sri Lanka (Ancient and Current)

3.7.1 Background

“Both British colonial education and the pre-colonial Buddhist schools have contributed distinctive elements to current system of education and training in Sri Lanka” (Australian Heritage Projects and Narangoda, 1992).

3.7.2 VET systems in Mediaeval Sri Lanka

It is not known of the nature of training of skilled personnel in those various spheres, and of the institutions at which vocational/technical education was imparted, especially at the higher levels. It is however clear that in mediaeval Sri Lanka there was, at the craft level, a system of apprenticeship and instruction for craftsmen, artifices, potters, weavers, etc. (Coomaraswamy, 1907).

The system of apprenticeship and related education found to be the greatest interest among the ‘Kandyan’ craftsmen. (Hill country, Kandy was the last kingdom of Sri Lanka up to 1815).

The crafts were hereditary. Sons of craftsmen were trained in their trade as a matter of course, in the workshop itself. They picked their work in easy stages by diligently following the instruction, examples and practices of skilled craftsmen. From the very beginning, the disciple absorbed together technique, tradition and metaphysics. There is an argument to be made that vocational education of the present and the future cannot replace workplace education and training of the old craftsmen; for current technical/vocational education provides only technique. The relationship between the master and the pupil was of lasting reverence and affection.

3.7.4 Workshop Education (Mediaeval)

‘It was usual for one man to practice several of the higher crafts at the same time, the pupils also had practiced in several crafts, but usually selected one or more as their special work. A craftsman proficient in five crafts was called *Silpacariya* (master craftsman). Details of this system are provided by Coomaraswamy, (1907).

In the case of such apprentices, a general and religious education was imparted at the same time, similar to that given in *pansala* (A Buddhist temple school). Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic were thus taught; the latter was essential for the purpose of the astrological calculations required to determine favourable (auspicious) times, for the commencement of important projects, and for the understanding of the measurements given in the technical books referred to. The rules for drawing figures necessitated the construction and use of scales. A good deal of Geometry of a practical character was also learnt in connection with the construction of designs. The master craftsman has thus a small school where technical instruction was given in addition to an ordinary education. A more detailed picture is provided by Coomaraswamy:

‘The whole system is indeed mainly one of hereditary transmission of a craft; and though other pupils were admitted, the master was loath to reveal his last secrets saved to a son, or perhaps to a faithful pupil at the completion of his course. As the apprentice grew up, he continued to work for and with his teacher, and thus the tradition was perfectly transmitted.’

‘As architects, painters and designers, a thorough knowledge was essential to the superior craftsmen, and found a highly systematic course of instruction in use for the education of apprentices. These were for usually the sons of master craftsmen; but the sons of relations and even outsiders were also received. A man of the proper cast, wishing to apprentice his son to a master craftsman, would first find a fortunate hour (astrologically), and then proceed to the craftsman’s house with his son of about six years old, and one or more servants carrying presents of food items and betel

leaves on a yoke. The boy was first to learn drawing, he was given a yatiporuwa, a preparation known as vadi. Vadi was made by grinding together tamarind seed, coconut charcoal, iron slag, and indigo with the juice of Kikirindi leaves (Eclipta erecta, L.). The ingredients were ground together and mixed with finely-powdered quartz (Tiruwana gal) and smoothly spread on the board and allowed to dry. Upon the board so prepared the pupil learnt to draw, using for his pencil the spine of a sea urchin (ikiri katuwa) mounted in a bamboo handle. Nowadays, ordinary slates and slate pencils are used' (Coomaraswamy, 1907, pp.63 & 189).

3.7.5 Development of current system of education and training in Sri Lanka

The first schools in Sri Lanka were Buddhist, ranging from Gurugedara or village schools to Pirivena or centres of higher learning. British initiatives were mainly concerned with the education in English of a small Sri Lankan elite, but they allowed Christian missionaries to organise schools which taught the vernacular languages. By the end of the nineteenth century Sri Lanka had a fairly well-developed diverse system of primary education, but secondary education was mainly confined to urban areas. Until 1921 the only post-secondary education available was at the Colombo Academy (later Queen's College and Royal College), and Colombo Medical School, founded in 1870, at the same period the Ceylon Technical College was founded in Colombo. In 1921 Ceylon University College was founded in Colombo, affiliated to London University. It became the University of Ceylon in 1942.

During the colonial period technical training was concentrated upon the arts, engineering and some trades. (Pieris, 1957). However, it was a relatively closed system relating to corporations, castes and families, with knowledge being passed down from father to son (Library of Congress, 2006).

In 1931 Sri Lanka was granted a measure of internal self-government leading to major changes in the education system. Free state provided education was introduced, with Central schools established to offer a more equitable standard of general education and to provide secondary education in rural areas; scholarships

provided for talented students in need. Some private schools remained. The period since independence (1948) has seen virtually every new Government make major changes to the education system, however certain features have remained fairly constant.

By the 1970s technical education had become the most dynamic field of education in Sri Lanka. In the 1980s there was a network of 27 technical colleges and affiliated institutes, with over 22,000 enrolments. (Library of Congress, 2006)

3.8 National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) & Affiliated Other Training Institutes

In addition to the courses offered at Technical Institutes, NAITA (formerly the National Apprenticeship Board-NAB) offers Technical or Vocational courses at three centres. The courses offered by NAITA are categorised under seven levels of training: craft, artisan, situational, technician, engineering, sub-technician, and special. General entry is based on performance in the Sri Lankan GCE 'O' Level, but there are courses for which this is not required. Courses offered are related to the perceived requirements of the economy and cater specially to industry needs.

The National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) was set up under the provisions of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act, Number 20 of 1990 to supersede the National Apprenticeship Board (NAB) with added objects and wider powers for the purpose of improving the quality of Vocational Education and Training in Sri Lanka. NAB was founded in 1964 with the recommendation of the Technical Education Commission Report (Technical Education Commission Report, 1963).

(Department of Employment, Education and Training (Australia); prepared by National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition in Association with Industrial Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges-1992)

The trend of Government allocated funds for National Apprenticeship Board which was changed to National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority in 1990.

Table 2: Government allocated funds for National Apprenticeship Board

1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	
30.0	51.5	59.6	65.0	74.0	95.8	134.8	139.0	138.0	167.5	180.1	Rupees Million

(Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report of 1994)

Skills training in Sri Lanka is a combination of a range of factors and initiatives. It reflects the wider education system in several ways. Firstly, it is an element in the hierarchy, and like other VET systems is typically weakly placed in the hierarchy. Therefore, students choose to enter VET only as a second option, and typically they are not the students with the strongest skills in areas such as English language. Secondly, VET in Sri Lanka shares with general education a concentration upon abstract knowledge and rote learning. This compares with a competency based approach that has been adopted in Australia and several other countries. Thirdly, its students share a similar attitude towards authority and hierarchy and there is a tendency for the students to take these attitudes into the workforce and workplace.

3.8.1 Summary of an Interview with W. Hemachandra, an ex-trainee of Ceylon German Technical Training Institute (CGTTI).

According to Central Bank of Sri Lanka, A.R. 2005, total budgetary allocation from 2005 – 2006 for vocational education and training, it indicates an increase from the previous years, to a total of Rupees 2,203 million. Further, it says, projected expenditure for 2006 will be more.

An ex-trainee of the above institute W. Hemachandra (currently employed at Qantas as Aircrafts Maintenance Engineer) was interviewed by the researcher. A large number of ex-trainees of the above institute who have migrated to Australia during the last decade and the reflections of the ex-trainee provide a good description of the institute.

The German-Ceylon Technical Training Institute then known as Ceylon German Technical School was founded in 1960. The school was set up and maintained with funds and advice provided by Germany. At the inception German Instructors carried out the training along with the local instructors understudying. The objective of the setting up the Training School was to supply skilled personnel to the newly established Ceylon Transport Board (CTB). The interviewee Hemachandra, had been in the first batch of trainees and in completion of his training he had been further trained as an Instructor in Germany. (The interviewer/writer of this thesis was in the panel of examiners in the final trade testing of the first batch of trainees in completion of their training at this school). Hemachandra served as an instructor at the CGTTI for over 10 years and migrated to Australia in 1986.

3.9 Australian Tripartite mission to study training of skilled workers in Sri Lanka

Australia suffered a dearth of skilled manpower in eighties, which prompted a team of Australian Tripartite mission to study the training of skilled workers in Metal and Electrical trade to visit a few countries including Sri Lanka in 1984.

The mission had visited many training institutions in Sri Lanka in 1984. Hemachandra (interviewee) had been on the teaching staff when the team visited the CGTTI. The team had studied the training methods in detail and assessed the standard of the training at the institute. The mission in its report has highly commended the training of skills and the level of standard achieved by the trainees.

3.9.1 The ‘Skill-Migration’

The report of the mission caused recognition of the CGTTI Certificate by the Australian High Commissioner in Colombo and the Australian Immigration Department; with the result CGTTI trained skilled personnel have migrated to Australia in great numbers mainly during the period 1988 to 1992. Most of them had to face the jobless situation in Australia due to world depression of 1991, and up to 1993.

3.9.2 CGTTI ‘Old-Boys’ Association in Australia

These ex-trainees of the CGTTI have formed a body titled ‘CGTTI Old-boys Association’ in Victoria with a branch in New South Wales. According to Hemachandra (interviewee) there are nearly two thousand ex-trainees of the CGTTI across Australia who has migrated since early 1970s. The Sri Lanka Government has allowed the ‘skill-drain’ from the country as employment could not be found for all the passing out trainees. It seems that Australia has benefited by the prevalent Sri Lankan situation.

❖ An example of the need to reform Technical Education and Training in Sri Lanka in keeping up with the demand of the modern labour-market

The Sri Lanka-German Technical Training Institute has been a highly reputed trades level skills training centre. Ex-trainees of Sri Lanka German Technical Training Institute (SGTTI) have formed Alumnus in Victoria with a branch in New South Wales. Generally, SGTTI offers courses or skill training in job-specific courses such as welding, fitting, electronics, machining, automobile mechanics and plumbing. However, the members of the Alumnus have realized that the training and education they received were inadequate according to present job market demands. There were no computer training in their curriculum at that time. Auto-mobiles of today are loaded with computers. Therefore, an automobile mechanic should have the basic knowledge of computers. Similarly, machine tools and some other trades also need computer knowledge according to emerging technologies of today (informal discussions with former graduates).

Recently, the Alumnus donated a batch of computers to its mother Institute in Sri Lanka, in order to facilitate incorporating computer learning into relevant curriculum of trade courses. This indicates that the graduates felt the need for, a wider relevant basic knowledge of skills relating to emerging technologies and specialization in a job-specific skill such as machining, welding, automobile mechanics and etc.

3.9.3 Basic Technical Training Institute (BTTI) Ratmalana

Hemachandra (the interviewee) had received 18 months training at this Institute where the writer (interviewer) too had been a senior Instructor. This was a unique Institute where youth ages 14 to 19 years were offered 18 months of (residential) training. The BTTI was established in 1950 under the Ministry of Transport and Works. Trainees were given a thorough practical training in the training workshop from 7am to 4pm with daily two hours of classroom theoretical instruction. First six months were general training and the last twelve months training was in one particular trade such as fitter, turner, machinist, welder, electrician, carpenter, etc. Throughout the residential training period of eighteen months, physical training, ethics, music, drama, religious education, gardening (during first three months only), gymnastics, boxing and various other sports were compulsory. On completion of eighteen months of training they were found employment as second year trade apprentices in various government workshops and factories.

This institute BTTI was originated in 1942 during world war two in cadjan (coconut branches) temporary buildings at Maharagama, as an accelerated (residential) training centre. Entry level was 14 to 16 years of age. This was then known as 'Ceylon Boys Technical Training Corps'. (When it was moved to permanent building at Ratmalana in 1950 the name changed to Basic Technical Training Institute. At temporary buildings, in 1942 the trainees were given a 'total education' such as English, Mathematics, Geometrical and Mechanical Drawing, Engineering materials, etc and after study hours extra curricular activities as mentioned earlier were compulsory. Selected trainees were taken daily to the Ceylon Technical College in Colombo to attend Engineering Workshop Technology classes (the writer had been a trainee at this training centre in 1942, and at the end of 1942 when the 'Royal Naval Aircraft Training Institute' was established by the British the writer was recruited to the first batch to be trained on aero-engines).

3.9.4 Traditional Apprenticeship Training in Companies

The traditional type of apprenticeship training existed in large companies like Walker Sons & Co. Ltd., and Colombo Commercial Company (Engineers) Ltd., in Sri

Lanka. The history of apprenticeship in Sri Lanka goes back to the early colonial period when apprenticeship was introduced in Britain. At present time the traditional apprenticeship system is under pressure and stands at a crossroads as Sri Lanka moves towards more mixed training arrangements. However, this system operates effectively in some major companies and also in certain Government workshops in Sri Lanka.

3.9.5 A re-examination of VET Systems in Sri Lanka

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka recently noted:

'A continuous improving education system is a pre-requisite for rapid growth and development. The education system includes general education, technical and vocational education and finally higher education. In the past decade, private sector involvement in general education has shown an exponential expansion, filling gaps in Sri Lanka's public sector driven educational system. University education in Sri Lanka, which is a public sector monopoly, suffers from both the failure to meet the demand and failure to supply a quality education in many fields compatible with global trends. This failure is demonstrated by many indicators: a large number of students entering the labour force at an early age, choosing vocational training instead of university education, travelling abroad for education and foreign education institutes making a commercial presence in Sri Lanka to attract local students. The rigid agitation within Sri Lanka by pressure groups has kept the government postponing the much-needed decision of deregulating the higher education sector, which is akin to regulating domestic production in favour of imports. However, it should be noted that at the time of independence, Sri Lanka attracted students from many foreign countries due to the high quality university education prevalent at that time' (Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report, 2004).

This is a familiar story in educational development in many countries, and especially developing countries. Despite this legacy in recent years a number of important initiatives have been taken by the Sri Lankan Governments to improve the training systems as part of reform to improve economic prospects and competitiveness. A re-examination of the VET systems as discussed on above headings gives an indication of the factors that exert a critical influence on

determining the success or failure of meeting the manpower demands affected by Sri Lanka's economic conditions.

3.9.6 The Traditional Apprenticeship is in the decline

In analysing the traditional apprenticeship system it generally indicates that in the last twenty years traditional apprenticeship has been in the decline. Employers have looked to other external and internal labour market arrangements and the government have introduced alternative training schemes such as flexible apprenticeship training courses offered by National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority.

3.10 Recent Reforms

It should also be noted that the system is held by the Australia's VET system is fragmented. This is not unusual (for example Australia historically had a fragmented VET system and it was only drawn into a national system in the 1990s). In Sri Lanka's case, as is typical of many developing countries (Keating et al, 2002) this has been exacerbated by the habit of elements of overseas systems being introduced into the country (initially British and German, and more recently other countries such as Australia). Also typical of many systems is that it has lacked quality due to a combination of a lack of capital investment and trained personnel.

Currently, Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) have been established as the appointed body in vocational education and training in Sri Lanka functioning as Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational and Technical Education. Its functions include preparation of plans, maintenance of a national accreditation and certification maintenance of Labour Market Information and assistance and Tertiary and Vocational educational institutes and development curricula. TVEC is the regulatory body for all aspects of implementing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sri Lanka and has outlined the key policies and operational features of the Vocational Qualifications Systems in Sri Lanka (NVQSL).

The NVQSL provides the opportunity for sustainable, strategic national training needs and it will easily be able to achieve recognition for qualifications, skills and knowledge of Sri Lanka in an increasing competitive global environment. Certifications of its levels (in total, 7 levels) from institutions are accredited by the TVEC and they are nationally recognised. In addition, the National Institute of Technical Education of Sri Lanka (NITESL) is the lead body functioning under the Ministry of Development, Vocational and Technical Education that is mainly for teacher training, curriculum development and teaching aid development. NITESL was established with the task of improving both quantitative and qualitative aspects of Technical Education and Vocational Training in Sri Lanka. (<http://www.educationsguidesrilanka.com/html>)

Recently, the Asian Development Fund (ADB) has agreed to help more highly skilled workers in Sri Lanka through a new US\$20 million loan to improve technical education and vocational training (TEVT). Building on the result of the ADB-assisted Skills Development Project will raise the quality, relevance, and sustainability of the programs for technicians and technologists by developing standards, upgrading selected colleges, and boosting the capacity of TEVT teachers and personnel. (<http://www.adb.org>, 22 November 2005)

Hence, with global technological change all VET systems have faced immense challenges of building and retaining the capacity to deliver skills that are relevant to industry needs. This is the case for graduates entering the Sri Lankan labour market (Earle, 2001). It is even more likely to be the case for Sri Lankan graduates entering the Australian labour market.

The following Chapter 4 explains why I have formed the hypothesis relating to the research problem.

CHAPTER FOUR

HYPOTHESIS

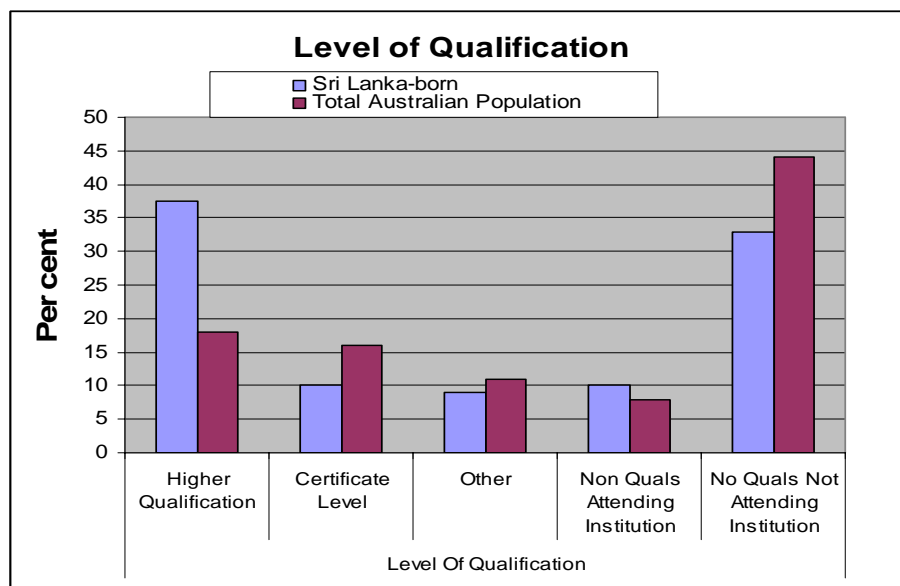
4.0 The Sri Lankan born population of Australia

The Sri Lanka born population is heavily concentrated in the two states of Victoria and New South Wales. In 1996, only 19.5 per cent of them lived outside of these two states. Melbourne, the capital of Victoria alone had 48.7 per cent of all Australia's Sri Lankan born. According to the 1996 census told there were 47,103 Sri Lankan born people of whom (50.00 per cent) 23,571 live in Victoria in comparison to (30.4 per cent) 14,340 in NSW. (*Source: Research and Statistics Unit-DIMIA*)

Consequently, according to Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), the latest Census in 2001 recorded 53,610 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia, an increase of 14 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution showed Victoria had the largest number with 26,670 followed by New South Wales 16,910.

Broad data on Sri Lankan migrants drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics census and labour force data are provided below.

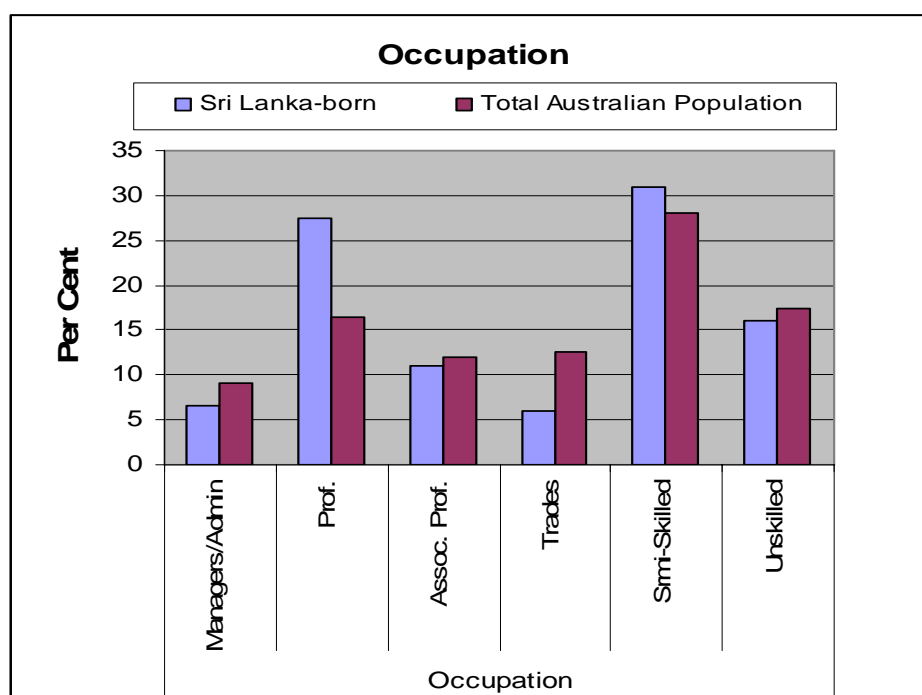
Figure 1: Qualification levels, Sri Lankan and Australian populations



❖ Qualifications

In 2001, of Sri Lanka-born people aged 15 years and over, 57.1 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Amongst the Sri Lanka born, 37.2 per cent had higher qualifications and 10.3 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. Of the Sri Lanka-born with no qualifications, 24.9 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

Figure 2: Occupations, Sri Lankan and Australian populations



❖ *Employment*

Among Sri Lanka-born people age 15 years and over (in 2001), the participation rate in the labour force was 67.5 per cent and the unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 63.0 and 7.4 per cent respectively. This reflects the percentage of skilled migrants amongst the Sri Lankan community. Of the 30,500 Sri Lanka-born who were employed, 51.7 per cent were employed in a skilled occupation, 30.8 per cent in Semi-Skilled and 17.4 per cent in Unskilled. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 52.6, 28.9 and 18.6 per cent respectively. The proportion of Sri Lankan born who were Professionals and Associate Professionals (37.6 per cent) was considerably higher than in the total Australian population (29.2 per cent) and among the overseas born (30.7 per cent).

The occupational distribution depicts that the total number of (Sri Lanka-born) Professionals and Associated professionals 2,406 and 1,361 respectively are the highest in Victoria. Victoria had 8.0 per cent (964) working as Tradespersons and Related workers compared with 6.5 per cent Australian wide. These figures emphasise the appropriateness of selecting Victoria as the sample for investigation.

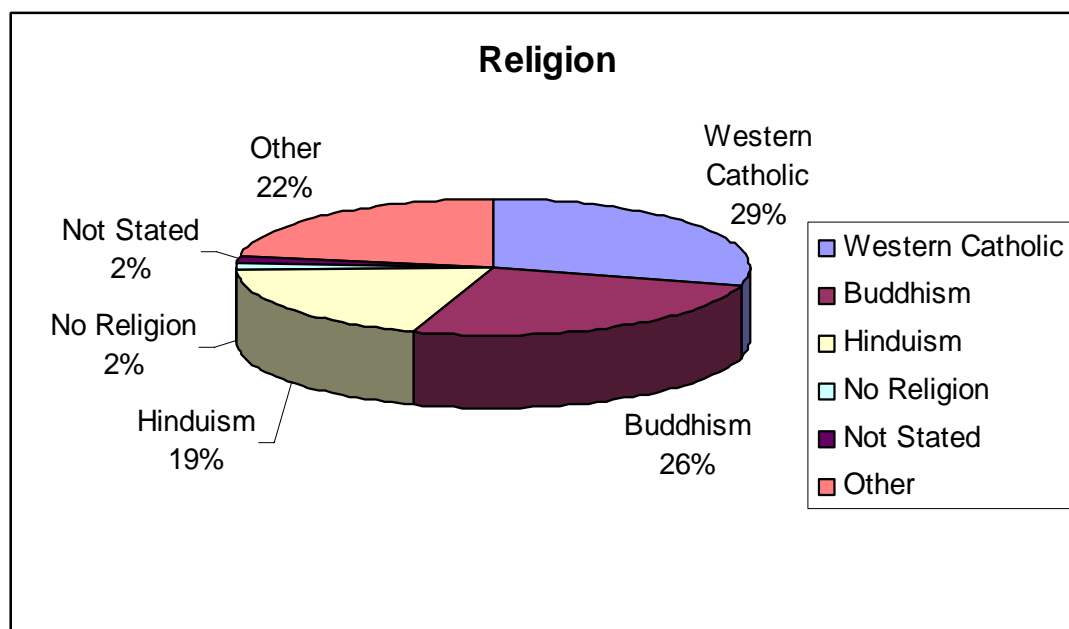
❖ *Citizenship*

At the 2001 Census, the rate of Australian Citizenship for the Sri Lanka-born in Australia was 81.9 per cent. The rate for all overseas-born was 75.1 per cent. This suggests that it is a relatively settled community, which might reduce disadvantage in the labour market.

❖ *Language*

The main languages spoken at home by Sri Lanka-born people in Australia were English (40.4 per cent), Sinhalese (32.4 per cent), and Tamil (24.1 per cent). Of the 31,720 Sri Lanka-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 93.6 per cent spoke English very well or well and 5.6 per cent spoke English not well or not at all. Upon this basis language should not be a major employment barrier.

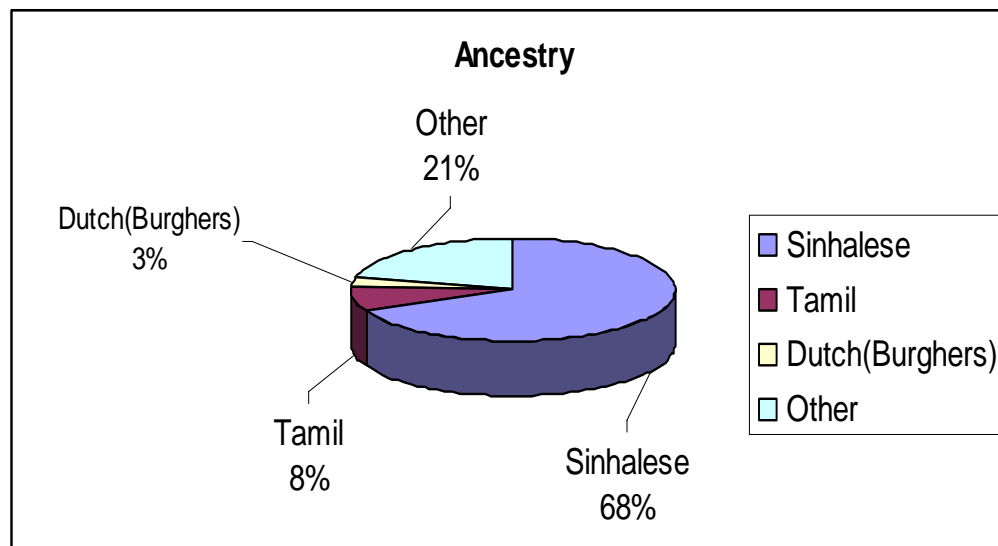
Figure 3: Religion, Sri Lankan and Australian populations



❖ *Religion*

At the 2001 Census the major religions amongst Sri Lanka-born were Western Catholic (15,610 persons), Buddhism (13,860 persons) and Hinduism (10,210 persons). Of the Sri Lanka-born, 2.0 per cent stated 'No Religion'. This was lower than that of the total Australian population (15.5 per cent). Once again, religious affiliations are not significantly at variance with this for the overall populations.

Figure 4: Ancestry of Sri Lankan population



❖ *Ancestry*

In the 2001 Census, the top three ancestries that Sri Lanka-born persons reported were, Sinhalese (36,410), Tamil (4,150) and Dutch/Burghers (1,690).

4.1 Labour Force Status

In 1996 the labour force participation rate among the Sri Lanka-born aged 15 years and over was 67.4%. This was a decrease from the 70.7% recorded at the time of the 1991 Census. The labour force participation rate for Sri Lanka-born males (78.7%) was higher than for Sri Lankan-born females (56.0%). Both rates were somewhat lower than in 1991.

For both males and females, the labour force participation rates for Sri Lanka-born in 1996 were higher than those for all overseas-born and for all Australians. These were respectively 67.2% and 71.4% for males and 48.0% and 52.8% for

females. At ages 45-64, Sri Lanka-born men were much less likely to be not in the labour force (12.1%) than were overseas-born men (24.5%) and all Australian men (22.9%) at the same ages. A similar pattern held for Sri Lanka-born women: 36.6% of those aged 45-64 were not in the labour force compared with 49.7% among all overseas-born women and 46.4% among all Australian women.

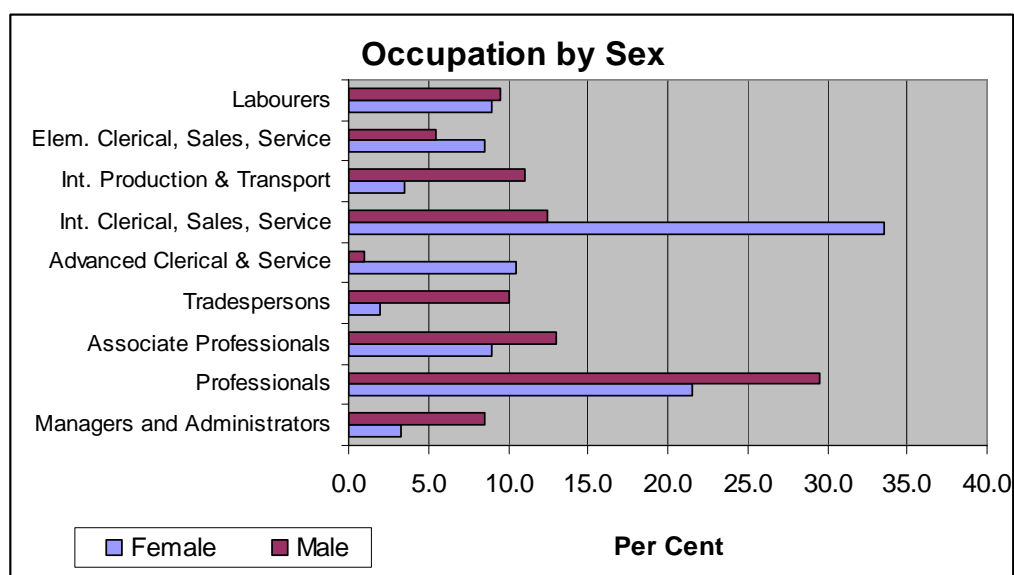
The unemployment rate among Sri Lanka-born males was 9.8% and among Sri Lanka-born females 13.6%, compared to 9.9% for all Australian males and 8.3% for Australian females. As for the total Australian population, the rates were particularly high in the 15-24 year age group. In this age group they were higher for the Sri Lanka-born (23.0% for males and 21.8% for females) than for all Australians (17.1% for males and 14.3% for females). Since the census unemployment rates have fallen. However, the labour force survey is not large enough to measure rates for the small Sri Lankan population.

However, according to 1996 census date, the total population of Sri Lanka-born in Victoria were 23,571 and 2001 Census date indicates 26,670 respectively (50 per cent of Sri Lanka-born in Australia wide). Statistics depict the total employed figure as 12,405 in Victoria; 'Inadequately described or not stated' column shows 332 and therefore the total employed number would have been minus this number 332, which means 12,405 less 332 equals 12,073. When considering Victoria's total population (Sri Lanka-born) of 23,571 and the number of people employed figure 12,073, nearly 50 per cent were unemployed in Victoria. This 50 per cent cannot be taken as the actual because within this 50 per cent school children (under 15 yrs of age) and old age parents (or pensioners) could have been included. It could be assumed according to these figures that an estimated number of 10,000 persons were unemployed in 1996 census period.

The three groups Professionals, Associated Professionals, and Trade persons & related workers under investigation are contained in the total unemployed 10,000 persons in Victoria. Accordingly, the investigations are being focussed at this point of premise that a large number of Sri Lankans born are unemployed in Victoria.

4.2 Industry

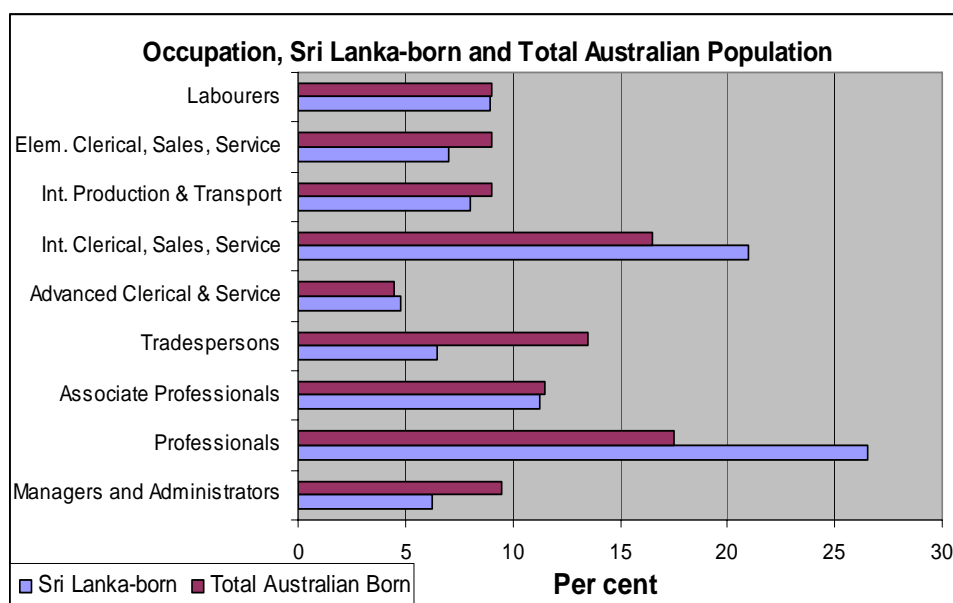
Figure 5: Occupations of Sri Lankan population



Source: 1996 Census-Customised Matrix Table CS085

Note: Percentages do not include 'Not Stated' responses or 'Inadequately described' responses in the denominator

Figure 6: Occupation, of Sri Lankan and Australian born populations



Source: 1996 Census Customised Matrix Table CS085

Note: Percentages do not include 'Not stated' or 'Inadequately described' responses in the denominator

In 1996, the most common industry for employed Sri Lanka-born men was Manufacturing (20.5%), followed by Property and Business Services (13.3%), Government Administration and Defence (8.4%) , Retail Trade (8.1%), Wholesale

Trade and Health and Community Services (both 7.4%). This order was much the same as in 1991, bearing in mind the changes in classification in the meantime. In 1991, Manufacturing led with around 19%, Wholesale and Retail Trade (around 15%) followed by Community Services appears to have included Education, the inclusion of which would bring the proportion in Health and Community Services in 1996 to 12.1%.

For employed Sri Lanka-born women in 1996, 22.1% worked in Health and Community Services, 11.4% in Government Administration and Defence, 11.1% in Property and Business Services, and 10.5% in Manufacturing. In 1991, Community Services (which as noted above, included Education) employed around 29%, Finance, Property and Business around 17% and Public Administration and Defence around 14%.

Compared to the total Australian population, Sri Lanka-born males were much more likely to be in Manufacturing, in Property and Business Services, in Health and Community Services and in Finance and Insurance. They were much less likely than the total Australian population to be in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, in Construction, and in Retail Trade.

Compared to all Australian women, Sri Lanka-born women were much more likely to be in Finance and Insurance and in Government Administration and Defence. They were far less likely to be in Retail Trade and in Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants.

By State and Territory, the principal features of interest are the greater concentrations of the Sri Lanka-born in Manufacturing in Victoria, in Property and Business Services in Western Australia and in Health and Community Services in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Given this high concentration of Sri Lankan people in Victoria and Melbourne, the study is located in the city of Melbourne, with all subjects residing in Melbourne. This location has the further advantage of strong localised networks of Sri Lankan people, mainly in the eastern suburbs. Furthermore the skilled migrants

who are the subjects of this study have formed what amount to alumni within their broad occupational groupings of trades, technicians and engineers. My networks within the Sri Lankan community and my experiences of migration and of working in the engineering industries allowed me to access and communicate within these alumni.

Prior to the survey a workshop of a sample of Sri Lankan skilled migrants was held in Melbourne in order to further investigate the premises of this study.

4.3 Scope of study

According to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, skilled immigrants are defined as: a) managers and administrators b) professionals c) associate professionals d) trade persons and related workers. Even though Sri Lankan skilled persons have migrated after their skills and qualifications have been recognised in both Sri Lanka and Australia, I have observed that many of them find difficulties in finding employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications.

As indicated in chapter 1, one factor in these employment difficulties is likely to be the changes in skill needs of industry, which are exacerbated by the different characteristics of industries in Sri Lanka and Australia. Schmid (2002) has investigated the concept of transitional labour markets as an increasing phenomenon of globalisation. Workers move between different types of employment – permanent and casual, full and part-time – and in different combinations of work and education/training. This is related to the more rapid obsolescence of skills, occupations and industries. Thus workers are more likely to face the shock of skill changes, especially those in industries and occupations that are highly exposed to technological change. This is much more likely to be the case for skilled workers transferring from industries in developing countries where industries have had low levels of technology transfer to an advanced country such as Australia.

This possibility is not to discount other possible causes of difficulties in employment. Other factors could include the lack of language skills, cultural differences, the lack of employment experience in Australia, and a lack of networks.

The aim of this study is to investigate the employment experiences of Sri Lankan skilled immigrants in Victoria and the reasons for any difficulties that they have experienced. It should then be able to consider whether they need further education or training in order to face the emerging changes, and to update their skills.

4.4 The nature of the research problem and statement of the problem:

The objective of this research project is to investigate the difficulties faced by recent “skilled” immigrants from Sri Lanka, in gaining and maintaining employment commensurate with their qualifications, training and experience which are recognised by the Department of Immigration of Australia. The reasons for their barriers are many and complex, but not necessarily related to lack of qualifications. The problems to be investigated are:

- a) to validate the premise that skilled Sri Lankan immigrants do face significant recruitment and career advancement barriers in Australia and,
- b) to identify these barriers

4.5 Premises

The study is based upon the following set of premises:

Premise 1 Their educational qualifications, training and skills are recognised by the Department of Immigration Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) of Australia,

Premise 2 They are having difficulties in finding and keeping suitable jobs, although some have found employment in commensurate with their qualifications;

Premise 3 The reasons for their difficulties are many and complex. The essential format of the research is to identify and explain the many and complex reasons for such discontinuation of employment, unemployment or under-employment.

4.6 The specific questions, issues and problems being investigated are:

- a) *What are the barriers faced by the sampled groups in gaining employment?*
- b) *What is being done/can be done in their further education or re-training to prepare them more adequately for employment in the area in which they had already been recognised and can they be given specific on-the-job accelerated training in gaining employment?*
- c) *Have they had difficulties in employment in the transition to new technological skills as a result of globalisation and can they be re-trained?*
- d) *What are the factors affecting the career development of Sri Lankan immigrants?*
- e) *What factors have influenced those who are in full employment in their progress and pathways to success? (The aim is to identify whether those who have adverse experiences can learn from successful ones.)*

4.7 Validating their qualification and skill recognition

It needs to be recognised that the standards of skills of workers across different countries with similar qualifications can vary. The education and work backgrounds of workers and the quality of the course and assessments can all vary. The population of Sri Lankan skilled workers that are the subject of this study have gained relevant education and training from different institutions. For example trade persons and related workers are from various technical training institutions, i.e. Sri Lanka-German Technical Training Institute, or other Apprenticeship training schools or technical schools run by the Government and also by the private sector. The standard of training may be varied in different institutions.

The other two groups of professionals and associate professionals also come from a range of backgrounds. They too are the products of diverse range of universities and technical colleges and hence the measure of standards could vary.

In order to validate their qualifications and skill recognition, there is an assessment process in operation in Australia for overseas occupational qualification. These assessment bodies can be contacted for further information on specific occupations. As stated earlier, general information can be obtained from the booklet titled “General Skilled Migration” issued by the DIMIA (year 2000). This booklet states that, detailed information on various occupations can be obtained through the Occupational Information leaflets in the publications page of the National Office of the Overseas skills Recognition (NOOSR) website at: www.detya.gov.au/noosr/

For most occupations where training is specific to the occupation, and also should possess a qualification (such as a degree, diploma or trade certificate) and experience which meets the relevant Australian standards and which is specifically related to a nominated occupation and be able to meet any registration requirements in Australia. In some cases, experience without formal qualifications may be acceptable (*General Skilled Migration, DIMIA 2000, Part 3-pg.23*).

4.8 Skills Training in Sri Lanka

4.8.1 Australian Employer’s recognition of overseas qualification and skills:

The assessment of overseas qualifications and skills by relevant bodies in Australia is designed to facilitate skill migration to Australia. Nevertheless, on their arrival migrants can face barriers in securing employment in commensurate with their “recognised” qualifications and skills. Wooden explains that, ‘*such barriers include lower quality of education and entry regulations, cultural prejudices however also exist.*’ (Wooden, 1994)

The overseas qualifications and skill recognition assessment process for a nominated occupation may drag on for several months or perhaps for over one year.

When granting a 'skilled visa' for migration to Australia, skills must have been assessed as suitable for the nominated occupation. For a potential skilled migrant there are other aspects to be satisfied in the 'point system' other than skills assessment to be eligible for obtaining the visa (General Skilled Migrations- DIMIA, 2000). The length of time taken for the process can be one year to two years depending on the work load of visa granting authority in Colombo (in the case of Sri Lankan migrants).

4.9 Globalisation and new skills:

If a visa approval process extends for up to two years during this period the required skills related to a particular occupation could have changed with the changed technology, product and skills profiles in industry. For example, a skilled person who had been trained on IT and telecommunications specifically on photonics in Sri Lanka and assessed by Australian officials could arrive two years later in Australia as a 'skilled migrant'. (Photonics harnesses light to drive computers and telecommunication, with application reaching into many areas of engineering and industry). *"As the Australian photonics industry develops, the profile of its activities and skills needs is changing"* (Research paper released at a photonics education forum at National Convention Centre, Canberra-The Australian-8th November, 2000-pp.37)

Another example is that of Automobile mechanics trained a few years previously at the SLG Technical Institute who have migrated to Australia may lack knowledge of the computerised elements of the latest automobile engines. Those skilled tradesmen have to face difficulties in gaining employment.

4.9.1 The time gap and technological changes

In this context knowledge and skills gained in Sri Lanka may become outdated the time the migrant applies for jobs in the telecommunication or IT industry or even the automobile industry in Australia. Skilled migrants may find it difficult to gain jobs with the skills they possess, in a market that requires new skills every few years. There is a dearth of literature relating to this issue, maybe because authorities have not considered the considerable time gap between an application for migration and arrival

in Australia. Such skilled immigrants presumably would require re-training in order to encounter the emerging technological changes.

- a) Will the employer recruit persons possessing the required new skills, as a means of cost cutting?*
- b) There may be apprenticeships or traineeships offered by various agencies but will these programs fit into provide distinctly required new skills?*
- c) Could a new comer 'skilled immigrant' meet the financial needs to follow a required training course anticipating update skills? It is highly unlikely because, he or she has to face commitment as priority in settling in their new country of residence.*

Flatan and Hemmings (1991), utilising data from 1985 Australian longitudinal Survey, found that immigrants were generally less likely to receive job-related training. Furthermore, Baker and Wooden make use of a large ABS data which involves over 15,000 Australian workers.(Wooden, 1991) They find NESB immigrant workers were far less likely to be in receipt of re-training course for updating their skills. As well the use of a part of their meagre welfare allowances provided by the government would be impossible for this purpose because of the prevailing higher living costs and other much needed family priority needs. In this context there are more stringent conditions attached to getting government assistance.

4.10 Some qualified skilled immigrants compelled to undertake menial work:

There have been concerns raised by St. Vincent de Paul's president John Moore (*opinion, The Australian, October 24, 2000*) in relation to an increase in referrals from Centre Link (*Federal Government's Social Security Office*) seeking assistance from charity organisations for the needy.

Most referrals are food vouchers and other form of material aid. Some charities provide voucher contribution to electricity bills. There can be a range of reason why people access assistance from community agencies. Most referrals are due to people having unexpected expenses. So says the Minister responsible for family and community services (*the Australian, November 2nd -2000, pg.11*). According to

the Minister, referrals provide assurance that people seeking assistance have exhausted all income support entitlements. However, it is evident that most of the new skilled immigrants are unable to manage their living costs and consequently they are compelled whether they like it or not to seek assistance from charity organisations. In these circumstances they are driven to undertake jobs below the level of their formal qualifications.

It is understandable that these skilled immigrants before they arrive in Australia have high hopes of obtaining decent jobs commensurate with their qualifications, training and skills brought with them. Consequently immigrants who fall into this plight can eventually consider it a social stigma and tend to suffer from mental depression, and related illnesses. (*Wellbeing Journal No.64, pg. 77*)

Research by the Australian Population and Immigration Council (APIC) (1976) and by Iredale (1987, 1988) indicates a significant difference between successful recognition of overseas qualifications gained by English-speaking immigrants (Holton 1994).

Holton uses data from a set of four related national surveys commissioned in 1988 by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (*OMA 1989*). Holton and Lampugnani (1989) for example, draw on the data collected from first-generation NESB immigrants that show that around 45 per cent of this sample brought post-secondary qualifications to Australia. However, only 56 per cent of this qualified group applied for jobs using overseas qualification. Of those who did not apply, around 25 per cent cited lack of recognition as the major problem. Of those who did apply only 60 per cent succeeded in obtaining a job using overseas qualifications. In all, only one third of those who brought post-secondary qualifications to Australia have obtained a job using this pattern. (*Holton 1994, pg. 167*) This is a result of preference for other occupations, a major part involves wastage due to lack of recognition.

The surveys raise the issue of whether the skilled immigrants encounter non-recognition of their qualifications in obtaining jobs. The fact is those prior to their approval of migration to Australia, skilled migrant applicants are assessed for their suitability in relation to their education, skills, work-experience and work related

English language proficiency. Nevertheless after their arrival in Australia, it seems that they have to encounter potential barriers. Some of them may include:

- ❖ Difficulty in comprehending the Australian English pronunciation and Australian phraseologies even though they have learnt English in Sri Lanka;
- ❖ Complications in work related issues such as work-cover cases and tribunals, etc where interpreters are needed. The researcher has been involved in 50 such cases during 2000-2002
- ❖ Mismatch (as explained earlier) between their qualification/skills and the specific job market requirements; and
- ❖ Perhaps occasional racist or cultural prejudices which of course needs further research.

Healey argues that, 'for many ethnic communities in Australia, their over representatives in other ranks of unemployed (or under-employed) remains a matter of concern and racism cannot be discounted as a factor in the situation. Research studies show discrimination in employment against people from particular ethnic background, even when their qualifications are comparable with those of their competitors for the job (Healey, 1997)

Wooden suggests that (*see Morrissey et al. 1992, pg.9*) 'one way of addressing these issues is via a study of qualified immigrants, drawn from a wide range of professionals and trades, facing different demand and supply constraints, which attempts to match skills-based competencies to actual utilisation of skills by immigrants'(Wooden, 1994)

Wooden's suggestion is to some extent similar to the scope of this project in which three focussed groups of trade persons, associate professionals and professionals are being investigated about their employment experiences. Although a wide range of qualified immigrants are not drawn for investigation as envisaged by Wooden, the three groups focussed for this project provide the potential for some rich insights for a number of reasons. The groups represent a migrant community that is quite distinct and highly concentrated in the city of Melbourne. The migrant group is not Caucasian, but does have an English speaking background, albeit as a second

language. The three skilled groups also are clearly defined and this allows for comparisons between the experiences of the different groups. The existence of alumni for each of the groups has allowed for access to members of the three groups.

Preliminary interviews

In order to investigate the proposition of difficulties faced by Sri Lankan migrants in the Australian labour market the researcher conducted a number of interviews with people from Sri Lanka who have either emigrated to Australia, or who have worked with Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia, or both. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the proposition that Sri Lankan immigrants have faced employment difficulties, and they were conducted as a means of refining the survey that provides the main body of data for this study.

The proposition of labour market disadvantage for Sri Lankan migrants is difficult to quantify. Migrants to Australia come as economic migrants, under family re-union and as refugees. Sri Lankan migrants have come mainly under the first two categories. However, the mix has altered over the years as has the balance of overall migrant groups.

It will obviously be the case that economic migrants will have greater success in employment than the other two categories. However, as shown in numerous studies (e.g. see Keating et al, 2005) employment searching and recruit is frequently through networks, and this is especially the case in trade and manual skill based occupations.

Newly arrived migrants cluster geographically for social and economic support. The Sri Lankan migrant community is no exception, with a high concentration in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. However, the community is relatively small, and unlike some other recent migrant groups they have not been active in establishing their own enterprises that would enhance their employment base. As skilled migrants they have arrived with the hope and expectation of employment in their trained occupations. These occupations, however, have not had strong employment growth in recent decades.

With the decline of employment in the manufacturing industry the demand for intermediate levels skills has weakened, largely conforming to predictions from a range of authors such as Reich (1992). Maglen and Shah (1999) provide data that indicate negative growth rates in these skill categories, including negative growth for male workers, as shown below.

Table 1: Annual growth in employment 1986/87 – 1995/6

Occupational categories	All	Male
Symbolic analytical services - conceptual	2.4	1.7
Symbolic analytical services - technical	0.1	-0.8
In person services – professional	2.1	0.9
In person services – intermediary	2.3	1.8
In person services – elementary	3.7	3.3
Routine production services - - advanced skills	-0.1	-0.2
Routine production services – white collar	-0.2	-1.9
Routine production services – blue collar	0.4	0.4
Routine production services – low skill	0.7	0.4
All	1.4	0.7

Source: Maglen and Shah, 1999: Pg 22

The interviews were conducted in an open manner, with the interviewees being asked some general questions about personal experiences and general experiences of Sri Lankan migrants when they entered the labour market. Therefore, the responses are also presented in an open manner, where the interviewees own words are presented in a verbatim manner. The source of the interviewees is opportunistic – they are people who the researcher has made contact with in the course of his work with the Sri Lankan community.

❖ Interview 1

Mr D (new skill migrant) lived in Brunswick, Victoria where he first settled temporarily with one of his friends, a fellow Sri Lankan. Currently he is residing permanently in Victoria, and had been referred to the researcher by his nephew, an electrical maintenance engineer in a floor tile factory in Sri Lanka, requesting help to find a job for Mr D who was working with him as a senior Electrical supervisor.

Mr D explained, *“I arrived in Australia as a permanent resident under skilled Electrician category, on February 2, 1995. My qualifications are; City and Guilds of London Electrical Engineering full technological certificate, which is equivalent to associate diploma stream 3500 in Australia. Before I migrated, I gained experience as a senior Electrical supervisor. I commenced work here (in Victoria) on February 14, 1995, as an electrical fitter. An engineer, a Quality Management consultant Mr. L helped me to get this job. I feel so lucky to have got it so soon and should be grateful to him. I worked at this company for 8 months and went back to Sri Lanka to get married. When I returned, I could not find a full-time permanent work, but I did several odd-jobs. In 1998, I managed to get the Australian electrical licence. Although I was licensed, I still could not get a job as an electrician as everywhere at interviews asks for Australian experience. With great difficulty I managed to get a job as an electrician through a friend who was employed at the workplace. I worked at several places as a licensed electrician for short periods until I found the present company Toll Ipec under Swisslog Australia Ltd., where I am employed over two years satisfactorily as I did not face any problems. Although I could not get a position suitable to my qualifications, I feel satisfied being recognised as a skilled electrician in Australia”.*

Mr D's experience of gaining a job within two weeks after arrival perhaps is probably related to his capacity or opportunity to use networks. This however is something of an exception and in the experience of the researcher; the Sri Lankan community doesn't seem to have an external 'networking system' to help their new skilled immigrants, especially in comparison to some larger and more established immigrant communities in Australia.

❖ Interview 2

Dr. J. is a professional Engineer in Melbourne. He commented on the general experience of civil engineer migrants: *“when some Civil Engineers*

arrive in Australia under skill migration, they may have to face an economic downturn in the country and in consequence a dearth of Civil Engineer positions prevailing in the job market. Since these engineers have to make a living and in despair not getting any income they resort to search even at least for some menial work. Some of them find work such as tram drivers or taxi drivers. When the country's economy blooms and engineer jobs are in abundance, then they have to face a different situation at interviews where they fail due to lack of Australian experience in civil engineering. They become depressed and frustrated. Since there is a family to support, they reluctantly continue with lower type of work in desperation but suffering from depression having lost their hopes, self respect, professional dignity and social status. Consequently, these engineers have lost hopes while Australia has wasted much needed engineering skills; thereby causing a group of new migrants who are bewildered and pessimistic within the Australian society”.

❖ **Interview 3:**

Dr. A. is the Principal Engineer of Dams and the Secretary of the Institution of Engineers Australia (an ex-President of the Association of Sri Lankan Engineers Australia.)

“I have assisted migrant engineers from Sri Lanka for over 15 years to find suitable employment for them. This work was undertaken through the ‘Mentor Scheme’ of the Institution of Engineers Australia and since 1992, also through the Association of Sri Lankan Engineers Australia.

The Engineering degree from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka is highly regarded in Australia. The engineering degree from the University of Moratuwa is also well recognised in Australia. Both degrees are rated well ahead of engineering degrees from other Southeast Asian countries and other countries in the Indian Sub-Continent.

Most engineering graduates from Sri Lanka with about 10 years of experience have been able to find employment in Australia in their areas of expertise. However,

when the engineers take up senior management positions in their respective organisations in Sri Lanka, they gradually begin to lose touch with their technical skills. Therefore, someone at the age of 45 years who migrate from Sri Lanka would have been in a managerial position for about 10 years, and as such would have lost touch with their technical ability. Although in their Curriculum Vitae the experience appears to be impressive, they tend to fail at the interviews or even at their first job in Australia for this reason. One notable difference between engineering managers in Australia and Sri Lanka is that the Australian engineering managers keep up with their technical skills right through their career and do not entirely depend on their subordinates for technical assistance. Their ability to supervise and manage their subordinates is far superior to that of Sri Lankan engineering managers”.

Often, Sri Lankan engineers who migrate to Australia at the age of 45 years or older do so to educate their children. In doing so, they make a very large personal sacrifice, as they will be unable to find engineering positions to their liking. They often end up switching their careers and never return to engineering again.

Sri Lankan engineers who gain employment in Australia usually go on to do very well in their respective fields, because of their hard working nature, their technical skills and their social skills. Australia has greatly benefited from this pool of talent over many years now.

❖ Interview 4

Mr G., is the Senior Highway Design Engineer for the rural city Council-Warragul.

“I believe that one of the main reasons for having difficulties in getting a job for the professionals coming from Sri Lanka is the lack of presentation skills. We as Sri Lankans are lagging behind this skill very seriously. Our old education system (not now) provided only little room to develop our presentation skills. (Luckily the situation is changed to a great extent now).

Therefore, compared to the Australian born Australians who developed their presentation skills right from kindergarten, we face real difficulty in presenting ourselves and marketing our skills in the job interviews and also

in preparing our resumes when we first arrive to this country. This is a very unfortunate situation.

We have developed the skills required or at least have the capacity to get those skills very quickly compared to Australians. For example, when I first got my job, I have never used computers before (in Sri Lanka) even at the university stage. However, at the first job interview, I expressed positively that I would learn it quickly and get the required outcomes in a very short time. Having proved my capacity to pick the system up, after six months' time, I was officially asked to train the other engineers on that complicated Highway design computer package. This is mainly because of the competitive environment we have been adopted in Sri Lanka. As competitors we always try to be the first. This is the main reason for Sri Lankan not to lose their job even under difficult situations such as restructuring processes. I believe that more than 95% of our community falls in this category irrespective of the discipline or the type of job we do. (Engineers, Doctors, German Training School certificate holders, Accountants, etc.) Almost every one of us does our jobs comparatively better than others because of the desire to face the competition that was developed through our education system. I believe that is one of the good aspects of our education system”.

❖ Interview 5

Mr D. is a welder who has encountered an unfair dismissal which he believes was due to racial prejudices.

“I was employed on a permanent fulltime basis as a welder from December 1996 to 18.11.2002 at M HN Pty. Ltd., Melbourne.

On 18.11.2002 at 7.30 a.m., I reported to work and went to my work place at 7.35a.m. Mr. S and Mr N were frowning at me with a ferocious and a hateful attitude. Mr. S spoke to me in a very high tone of voice and said, “I am the supervisor today. John is not coming. You must finish all this work within today.”

I wanted to clarify and understand one of the jobs entrusted to me. When I asked about it Mr. D retorted, “you Black Sri Lankan Black B.....” and scolded me saying that I talk too much. Further in a very angry tone he said, “I will teach you a good lesson and give you a severe punishment.” He went to the office and came back immediately. Then he started to read a letter, ridiculed and intimidated me. I went to a side not to hear it. When I came back he started to read the same letter again. I went to a side again. When I came back again I told Mr. D that he has bullets in his head which can affect my family and me and that he should get rid of them. What I meant by bullet is dangerous and evil bad thoughts. After that Mr. D and management staff called the police. I was taken into custody. I give herewith (3) names and contact details of witnesses in order to prove the following acts and deeds of Mr. D, Management Staff and some workers.

I swear that Mr. D and the management caused much pain to my body and mind. I deplore this unlawful and unfair dismissal, which is a result of a long-term plot. I intend to explore all possible avenues of law against Mr. D and the management for my redress and a fair judgment. I reported this incident to the Australian Manufacturing Union with a copy to the Australian Regulation Commission”.

(Interviewed in Sinhalese and translated to English)

❖ Interview 6

Mr K is the founder President of Sri Lanka Engineering Diplomates Association of Australia.

“I arrived in Australia in 1992, under the skilled category migration and settled temporarily in Dandenong. Although I am qualified and possess Electrical Power Engineering Diploma with five years work experience in Sri Lanka, I was unable to find any job due to prevailing economic depression at the time in Australia. There were ‘job-clubs’ set-up to facilitate in finding suitable jobs matching qualifications. Nevertheless, I was unable to get the membership as there were no vacant positions. Fortunately, after two months, an Indian couple residing adjoining my flat, the man being a member

of the club, informed me that, there was a vacancy due to a migrant not turning up for the club's membership. Immediately, in desperation, I did the needful to register myself as a member of the club. The club managed to find me a job, but not in commensurate with my qualifications. The job was to assemble electronic parts. I accepted the job in order to make a living for us, with my wife and child. Until then I was delivering pizza to earn a few dollars and I continued to do so as the wages which I received were insufficient for us to live. Subsequently, I engaged in taxi driving after hours. I spent two years doing this type of under-employment. My wife and I were very depressed for having to go through these hardships. I was thinking to myself, it's a waste of my skills and forced to do these unskilled jobs. Not only for me, but also for Australia as it's wasting of skills.

My diploma was on Electrical Power Engineering. As such, I thought of following a part-time basic electronic course expecting a promotion where I am employed as an electronic-parts assembler, an unskilled or semi-skilled worker. Ultimately, after three years, with the 'Australian work-experience I gained, (not called for interviews earlier due to lack of Australian work experience) I managed to get a supervisor job in an electronic items production factory through my flat owner who has seen my qualifications. Apparently, his brother owns this production factory. Currently, I work there as a senior team-leader doing control of the production for the last ten years. Although the job is not in commensurate with my qualifications, however, I have job satisfaction being accepted me by the fellow workers and the management. It's so convenient because it is only five minutes drive from home to workplace.

Having experienced the above job difficulties, my thoughts were bothering me regarding my colleagues' (diploma holders) plight in Australia. I discussed with a few of them with the idea of forming an alumnus in order to secure well-being of the other colleagues in Australia. Having formed the Alumnus in 1997, there are 115 members in Victoria currently and also 30 'Diplomates' in N.S.W. who are not full members of the Alumnus in Victoria". (Translated from Sinhalese to English)

(For cultural reasons, some interviewees do not like to divulge their names because of the Sri Lankan community coming to know that they have been engaged in menial work in order to make a living in Australia)

These six testimonies indicate different experiences. It can be seen that not all of the experiences are unhappy. However, there are some common themes of lack of networks, lack of experience in Australian industry, language, lack of recognition for Sri Lankan qualifications, and possibly some forms of discrimination. The extent of these barriers and their impact upon the Sri Lankan community in comparison with other migrant communities is difficult to estimate. Several categories of workers in the Australian labour market have faced difficulties. Young women and older workers who have become redundant in declining industries face considerable disadvantages. As has been suggested above, the latter group may be similar to the Sri Lankan workers who may suffer skills obsolescence as a result of both industrial change and the time lapse that the immigration processes contribute to. Consequently the close network of the Sri Lankan skilled workers, including the alumni referred to in the sixth interview, provided the opportunity for a more detailed investigation of these issues.

The next Chapter 5 indicates the Methodology which would describe the research approach used in the whole project.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.0 The definition of skilled trades:

(Note: Skilled historically relates to the skilled trades, and have been defined through the apprenticeship model of training, and trade certificate awards. For the thesis 'skilled' is based essentially within the trade based definition and its associated qualification. Therefore, the identified skilled migrants are three levels:

- ❖ *Trade & related workers, who hold certificate level*
- ❖ *Technical or associated professionals, who hold diploma, etc.*
- ❖ *Professional engineers or other professionals with degree*

These are consistent with ABS Labour Force ACSO classifications.

The study is advantaged by the location of about 50 per cent of Sri Lankan migrants in Victoria, the majority of whom resides in Melbourne (48 per cent of the Australian total). It also is advantaged by the existence of three alumni in Melbourne that represents the three levels of skilled workers and that include about 40 per cent of the relevant populations.

The research has taken advantage of these communities, as the researcher has ready access to these organisations: The Sri Lanka-German Technical Training Institute Old Students Association, Sri Lanka Diplomate Association and Sri Lanka Professional Engineers Association.

The research questions are located in objective data on employment patterns and histories of the Sri Lankan skilled workers, and in subjective data on their experiences and perceptions within the Australian labour market, gained from the interviews and the experience of the researcher in working within the Sri Lankan community, including the alumni, over the past 30 years.

The core element of the study is a written survey administered to Sri Lankan workers in each of the three skills categories. The purpose of the survey was to

investigate in more detail and through a wider sample of the Sri Lankan population experiences in employment market, including barriers faced in gaining employment and advancement in employment and careers.

The survey has been supplemented with data on the employment patterns of the Sri Lankan community, which are compared with those for the overall workforce, and for different groups of comparable skilled migrants. The groups selected for these comparisons are all skilled immigrants, in the same three skill categories, and immigrants with English as the first language in the same categories. These data are available through the ABS Labour Force Survey.

The study has also taken a semi qualitative approach through a series of interviews with the sample of the skilled workers who were surveyed. The interviews have been conducted to gain more open information on the employment status and histories of the workers and the perceptions of their experience on the labour market.

5.1 The survey

The researcher developed an instrument upon the basis of the preliminary interviews that are reported above, and upon the basis of a focus group of workers conducted by the researcher. The survey instrument was drafted and then field tested on a sample of workers who were known to the researcher. After changes were made to the instrument it was prepared in two languages (Sinhalese and English- See appendices 1A-1D)

The samples of the population have been drawn from the alumni membership. This method provided strong access to the population because up to 90 per cent of all Sri Lankan skilled migrants in the relevant segment of the Victorian labour market are members of these organizations (see below).

Subjects were contacted by telephone, by mail and through informal meeting at functions. They were followed up with telephone calls, by meeting some of them at functions or by sending a note through a friend when the returns were delay. The percentage of valid returns was 38%. There were several barriers to high rates of

return. As most of the population is male, returns typically are lower than those for a population of mixed gender. Some workers did provide returns, but clearly had done so because of politeness and had not seriously engaged with the survey. These returns were discarded as invalid. Some clearly had difficulty with completing the returns, due to literacy or language reasons, and these returns were discarded. The instrument itself was quite demanding, and under these circumstances the percentage of valid returns was quite good. Furthermore, the percentages of returns across each skill category were fairly consistent and provide a reasonable sample for each. Details are listed below:

- a) Trades and related workers in Victoria estimated: 500
 - Survey sample investigated: 176
 - Valid Responses: 61
 - b) Associated Professionals (Diploma qualified) in Victoria estimated: 250
 - Survey sample investigated: 75
 - Valid Responses: 30
 - c) Professionals (Professional Engineers) in Victoria estimated: 200
 - Survey sample investigated: 55
 - Valid Responses: 24
- Total subjects surveyed: 306
- Valid returns 115

Each return was coded in order to incorporate qualitative responses and because they were in two languages, (See Appendix 1) they were then entered into an SPSS file, for some cross tabulations and analyses. The sizes have been selected to ensure an adequate degree of statistical significance for qualitative outcomes. The survey instruments include rating scales for both objective and subjective data and experiences, and this allows the use of statistical interpretations of labour market outcomes and experiences.

The field work was supplemented with a review of the extensive literature on immigration in Australia, including literature on immigrants' labour market experiences.

This study is based upon a survey of three contrasting immigrant groups: a) trade persons and related workers with certificates or no qualifications, b) technical or associate professionals with diploma or associate diploma, and c) professionals (engineers) with university degree or equivalent. Samples being drawn and data collected through three relevant alumni organisations based in Melbourne, and through personal contact. This was supplemented with qualitative methods: involving unstructured interviews. The approach of the study is mainly socially constructed in that the data that was gathered from the surveys could be interpreted in relation to initial presuppositions that were gained from the interviews.

Broadly described, the data that were sought from the subjects was:

- The employment experiences of Sri Lankan workers;
- Factors that the subjects observed in the workplace that may be associated with these experiences;

Three members from each of the three groups were then selected for follow up interviews in order to further explore their experiences and their perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and the characteristics of the workplaces. These subjects were selected randomly from groups of returns that were relatively robust in their descriptions. These interviews formed small case studies, for descriptive purposes.

5.1.1 The three groups:

- a) Members of the Sri Lanka German Technical Training Institute (SLGTTI) ex students Association, Melbourne. These students had been trained in automotive workshop practice and electrical trade skills, for example, as automotive mechanics, automotive electricians, diesel mechanics, fitters, welders, machinists, sheet metal workers, etc. Preliminary surveys reveal that some of those who have arrived over 10 years ago have been promoted to higher grades as foremen, supervisors or middle-managers in manufacturing industries.
- b) Members of the Sri Lankan Diplomat Association (Ex-Diploma students of Institute of Technology- Katubedda and Hardy Senior Technical Institute of Ampara, Sri Lanka), Melbourne. In Australia, these diplomas

are recognised by the National Office overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) as equivalent to Associate Diploma level. Possession of this Associate Diploma and with relevant experience these skilled immigrants may seek employment on Technical Officer level in one of the fields, for example, computer technology, technical designs, structural drawings, electronic technology, communication technology, laboratory scientific work, etc.

- c) Members of the Professional (Sri Lankan) Engineers Association, Melbourne. This category of professionals may possess university qualifications such as Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree or Doctorate in Engineering, for example in one of the fields such as mechanical, electrical, civil, structural, chemical or computer technology. They may be qualified in Sri Lanka or overseas. According to their qualifications and with relevant experience they may be able to find employment as professional engineers, engineering project managers, engineering management consultants, etc.

The preliminary interviews and the experience of the researcher suggested that many of these three categories find difficulty in gaining employment commensurate with their qualification, training and experience

5.2 Individual experiences

Diana Prince (1992) writes under the caption: “Perception of Work”, that “David Corson (1988) cites a paper by Robin Attfield (1984) in which he contends that meaningful work responds to an essential human need, that of self-respect. He continues to argue that employment and self-respect are linked and therefore the recognition of value of work to the individual justifies the planning for full employment as a high social priority.” Such context relates to Perera’s case described as follows:

“Perera arrived in Australia from Sri Lanka with his wife at the beginning of the year 1998, armed with a post graduate from US, fluency in English, a previous successful job in Europe with an economic think-tank, impeccable

qualifications as a former economics researcher and, finally, a boundless desire to succeed. In Sri Lanka, Perera had been more than modestly comfortable. He held down an influential position in the higher reaches of the bureaucracy. He was a member of the elite-distinguished, respected, highly informed and, compared with many of his countrymen and women, well paid. He was someone who might have been regarded as the ideal migrant. Perera had considered migrating to Australia above other countries because he felt that the country had a history of migration from Sri Lanka and assumed that he would have no trouble finding work judging by the vacancies advertised in The Sydney Morning Herald. However, what followed on is the familiar scenario. Between Perera and his wife, they were both unsuccessful in gaining a job despite applying to numerous jobs and soon, money began to run out. By the time Perera and his wife came to the Welfare Rights Centre in Sydney, it had been three months since their arrival and they were down to their last \$200 out of \$4,000 they have brought with them. Although Perera had applied for a Special Benefit, he was denied on the basis that he had not suffered a 'substantial change in circumstances.'

According to Professor Jock Collins and others, the policy mentioned above has clearly been ditched. He quotes, "It is phenomenal that after five decades of immigration, we are throwing out the idea of equality for all. The most difficult years of settlement are the first two years. It's the time of greatest need and yet, this is the time the Government pulls the rug out. It's a very short-sighted view of the economic contribution these people will make, but it is also very black-hearted move that shows no compassion or understanding of the migrant process".

The study included a "Job Seekers' Workshop" held on 1 November 1998, was conducted by the researcher at the Faculty of Education Monash University, as a supplementary survey relating to this project. The researcher had discovered a number of cases (32 cases) having experienced adverse situations in seeking jobs. The workshop was audio recorded. The purpose of the workshop was to gain some more detailed expressions of the experiences of people from Sri Lanka as background information for the construction of the survey instrument.

Healey argues that, 'research on migrants has found that 34.8% of non-English speaking background immigrants are over-educated for their jobs and underpaid for their skill level, compared with 11.6% of the Australian-born. Studies have also found that people of non-English speaking background have less access to training and promotional opportunities in the workplace than Australian-born workers (Healey, 1997).

Although there are mechanisms for the recognition of overseas qualifications the process is often slow and difficult and in some cases qualifications are not recognised.

Healey's argument, it is not that newly arrived skilled immigrants do not wish to undertake further training or bridging to enable recognition of their overseas qualifications, but for financial reasons they are unable to do so, and they therefore work below their level of skills, education and experience.

David Leser (1998) Diana Prince (1992), David Corson (1988) and Robbin Attfield (1984) argue that meaningful work respond to an essential human need of self- respect. David Leser (1988) cites, Professor Jock Collins as saying: "The most difficult years of settlement are the first two years. It's a time to great need and yet, this is the time the government pulls the rug out... but it is also a very black-hearted move that shows no compassion or understanding or the migrant process (pp.22-24)".

According to Leser and others 1998 many of these skilled migrants are subject to depression, high blood pressure and heart conditions linked to unemployment, under-employment, social and other psychological factors.

Colebatch (1999), economic editor of 'The Age' comments: "No problem wrecks the lives of more Australians than unemployment. To be unemployed is to shut out the mainstream of society, poverty, depression, ill health, crime, drug addiction, even death, are part of the damage it wrecks among families and individuals throughout the nation (How to kick a job goal,pp.13)."

Colebatch's comments apply to unemployed people who can receive government benefits. However, recently arrived skilled immigrants who encounter worse situations, yet they are ineligible for these benefits for the first two years after they arrive in Australia.

A 1991 report noted that 'according to research by the National Population Council in 1988 and other indicators, about 7,000 of the skilled migrants who arrive in Australia each year are not able to use their skills although they wish to. The annual cost to the Australian economy is estimated at, between \$100 million and \$250 million. There are also personal, social and community costs. In the last 20 years Australia has wasted, partly or completely, the skills of an estimated 200,000 skilled migrants.

Even when a migrant's skills are formally recognised, it does not follow that they will be used. Twenty percent of overseas-trained engineers have their qualifications accepted-but they are still unemployed or under-employed. (*Source: Migrant Skills Reform Strategy, Progress Report-June 1991-pg.31, National Advisory committee on Skills Recognition*).

The following chapter six would discuss what the literature has to say about skilled emigrants and their standing in the labour market.

CHAPTER SIX

LITERATURE REVIEW

6.0 Review

This dissertation has attempted to use a range of literature throughout each of the chapters. As a consequence the formal literature review (Evans, 2000) is brief and concentrates upon the specific issue of the factors that influence the employment outcomes of workers in the labour market. There is a wider issue of barriers to employment for all workers. However, this is a study of the relative experiences of Sri Lankan skilled migrants – their experiences relative to those of other migrants and other workers.

6.1 Employment outcomes of migrants

It is difficult to establish benchmarks for the labour market experience of Sri Lankan migrants. Although the Sri Lankan community in Australia is relatively small (53,610 in 2001) it is relatively heterogeneous. Most recent immigrants have arrived through humanitarian criteria, and also as part of family migration, offshore protection program and skilled migration programs. Earlier entrants also had diverse forms of entry. There also have been a significant number of Sri Lankan asylum seekers in Australia (Shiel, 2005). However, the Sri Lankan community in Australia is mainly middle class, and most have arrived with strong English language skills.

The labour force participation rates of migrants vary according to the different arrival categories (see table 1). As would be expected they are stronger for the Skills Stream categories and for the Family and Humanitarian streams.

There are similar variations for migrants from different countries. Those for migrants from mainly English speaking countries are similar to those of the Australian born population. However, those for migrants from non- English speaking countries were just over 53% compared with 67% for the Australian born population (Department of the Parliament Library, 2003). These participation rates have fallen

from the recession of the early 1990s, and one reason for this fall has been the decline in manufacturing employment over this period.

Table 1:

Labour force participation rates of migrants, 2001		
Migrant Categories	Six months after arrival	18 months after arrival
Skill Stream		
Business skills	54 %	80%
ENS*	99%	100%
Independent	89%	92%
SAS	85%	87%
Other Streams		
Family	53%	62%
Humanitarian	18%	32%

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2002

There are similar variations in patterns of unemployment for the different streams, as shown in table 2. Those for the Skill Streams are mainly very low, but high for the family and very high for the humanitarian stream. Further variations occur upon the basis of English language skills, as shown in table 3.

Table 2:

Migrant Unemployment, 2001		
Migrant Categories	Six months after arrival	18 months after arrival
Skill Stream		
Business skills	8%	0%
ENS*	0%	0%
Independent	8%	7%
SAS	21%	6%
Other Streams		
Family	22%	13%
Humanitarian	71%	43%

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2002

Table 3:

English Proficiency and Unemployment		
English speaking ability immediately after arrival	Unemployment rate six months after arrival	Unemployment rate 18 months after arrival
English 1st language	14%	4%
Very well	16%	7%
Well	18%	11%
Not well	33%	26%
Not at all	16%	25%

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2002

The Sri Lankan migrants who are the subject of this study do not fit any one category of migrant. They are a mixture of different categories, and they have arrived in Australia at various times over the past three decades (see chapter 7). They are mostly male, and they all have post-school qualifications and prior work experience. Most of them have good or very good English skills (see chapter 7).

Kyle et al (2005) identify the barriers for participation of migrants in the labour market as “including: language skills, education and training, labour market knowledge, access to informal and formal employment networks, poor provision of advice (including guidance and training) cultural transition issues and pre-arrival experiences.” (pp ii). Upon this basis it might be expected that the migrant group that has been surveyed would not face significant barriers to employment. Apart from their qualifications and language skills they all have access to formal networks in the form of the alumni that have been used to gain access to the groups for the survey. On the other hand, there could be difficulties in their cultural transitions into the Australian labour market.

Stanwick (2006) has recently noted that lower level certificate qualifications appear to have little impact upon employment outcomes for older workers. This finding

matches those of Ryan (2002) who provides the following estimates of the private returns to different levels of VET qualifications in Australia.

Table 4: Estimated rates of return to VET qualifications (%)

	<i>Basic^a</i> <i>Vocational</i> %	<i>Skilled^a</i> <i>Vocational</i>	<i>Associate^b</i> <i>Diploma</i>
Males			
Case 1: School leaver who undertakes their course full-time and works part-time	21.7	24.0	3.9
Case 2: School leaver who undertakes their course full-time does not work but receives AUSTUDY	13.6	15.8	2.1
Case 3: School leaver who undertakes their course part-time and works full-time	67.9	38.1	22.3
Case 4: 35 year old who undertakes their course part-time and works full-time	87.9	60.8	26.4
Case 5: Unemployed 20 year old who undertakes their course full-time	15.0	12.1	1.8
Females			
Case 1: School leaver who undertakes their course full-time and works part-time	23.7	12.9	<0
Case 2: School leaver who undertakes their course full-time does not work but receives AUSTUDY	17.5	10.6	<0
Case 3: School leaver who undertakes their course part-time and works full-time	45.1	17.4	19.7
Case 4: 35 year old who undertakes their course part-time and works full-time	64.0	27.4	14.9
Case 5: Unemployed 20 year old who undertakes their course full-time	19.6	8.1	<0

Source: Ryan, C. 2002, Table 4, p. 32

a Compared with school non-completers who commence full-time work at age 16.

b Compared with Year 12 completers who commence full-time work at age 18.

Experiences of the researcher

Over several decades as a community worker within the Melbourne Sri Lankan community and the three alumni I have worked within individual members of the community and the alumni in relation to social and economic issues, including employment access. Through this work I had noted that a significant number of these people have expressed difficulties and frustrating in gaining employment that they regard as commensurate with their qualifications and experiences. The anecdotal reasons for these perceived difficulties have included the following:

- a) Mismatches between their qualifications/experience and the employment expectations;
- b) difficulties in understanding the Australian (English) pronunciation, diction and Australian phraseologies;

- c) lack of English communication skills required at the workplace;
- d) racial prejudices of some of the job interviewers;
- e) cultural prejudices of some of the co-workers, supervisors and managers;
- f) unable to understand the Australian humour, jokes, or phrases including, colloquialism;
- g) rapid change of workplace technology which necessitates;
- h) 'culture shock' or feelings of inferiority due to lack of understanding of the Australian culture;
- i) a reluctance on the part of workers with high levels of qualifications to accept what they regard as low level or low status jobs; high qualifications and do not wish to accept jobs of lower status;
- j) financial constraints following undertaking training courses in order to update skills.

Healey has argued that, 'for many ethnic communities in Australia, their over-representatives in other ranks of unemployment (or the under-employed) remains a matter of concern and racism cannot be discounted as a factor in the situation' (Healey, 1997).

Impact of unemployment

He continues that, "research on migrants has found that 34.8% of non-English speaking background immigrants are over-educated for their jobs and underpaid for their skill level, compared with 11.6% of the Australian born. Studies have also found that people of non English speaking background have less access to training and promotional opportunities in the workplace than Australian born workers."

Healey's argument is not that new skilled immigrants do not wish to undertake further training or bridging to enable recognition of their overseas qualifications but for financial reason they are unable to do so, and they therefore work below their level of skills, education and experience.

Several authors (Leser, 1998); Prince, 1992; Corson, 1988; Attfield, 1984) argue that meaningful work responds to an essential human need of self-respect. Colebach's conclusions about the fate of migrants (p98) are even more intense in relation to migrants who do not have access to unemployment and other welfare

payments. Instead, they have to depend on their relatives or friends or funds brought (when migrated) from two years before they become entitled to the welfare payments.

According to research by the National Population Council in 1988, about 7,000 of the skilled migrants who arrive in Australia each year are not able to use their skills although they wish to. The annual cost to the Australian economy is estimated at, between \$100 million and \$250 million. There are also personal, social and community costs. In the last 20 years Australia has wasted, partly or completely, the skills of an estimated 200,000 skilled migrants.

Even when a migrant's skills are formally recognised, it does not follow that they will be used. Twenty percent of overseas-trained engineers have their qualifications accepted-but they are still unemployed or under-employed. (*Source: Migrant Skills Reform Strategy, Progress Report- June 1991-pg.31, National Advisory committee on Skills Recognition.*)(NCVER, 2000, pg.11)

6.2 Globalisation, new skills and training

The period between the skills recognition assessment combined with the visa process, and eventual arrival in Australia could be one year to two years, or perhaps more. During this period the required skills related to a particular occupation could have changed with the technological advances associated with globalisation and the associated changes in skills. For example, a skilled person who had been trained in IT and telecommunications in the photonics area in Sri Lanka would be assessed by the Australian authorities at the time of applying for emigration. This person would then arrive in Australia perhaps one or two years later, as a 'skilled migrant'. (photonics harnesses light to drive computers and telecommunication, with application reaching into many areas of the engineering industries). It has been noted that "as the Australian photonics industry develops, the profile of its activities and skills needs is changing" (*Research paper released at a photonics education forum at National Convention Centre, Canberra – The Australian- 8th November, 2000 –p.37*). In this context the knowledge and skills gained in Sri Lanka are likely to be outdated by the time the immigrant applies for jobs in the telecommunication or IT industry in Australia, with the result many find it difficult to gain jobs with the skills they possess, in a market that requires new skills every few years.

There is a limited amount of research on this specific issue of skills obsolescence caused by the time gap between application and assessment and arrival in the Australian job market. Flatau and Hemmings (1991), utilising data from 1985. Australian longitudinal Survey, found that immigrants were generally less likely to receive job-related training. Baker and Wooden (1991) make use of a large ABS data involving over 15,000 Australian workers. They find NESB immigrant workers far less likely to be in receipt of re-training course for updating their skills.

Recognition of skills

Research by the Australian Population and Immigration Council (APIC) (1976) and by Iredale (1987, 1988) indicates a significant difference between successful recognition of overseas qualifications gained by English-speaking immigrants (Holton 1994). This conclusion is supported by Holton and Lampugnani (1989) who use data from a set of four related national surveys commissioned in 1988 by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA 1989). . For example their analyses show that amongst first-generation NESB immigrants around 45 percent brought post-secondary qualifications to Australia. However, only 56% of this qualified group applied for jobs using their overseas qualification. Of those who did not apply, around 25% cited a lack of recognition as the major problem. Of those who did apply only 60% succeeded in obtaining a job using their overseas qualifications. In all, only one third of those who brought post-secondary qualifications to Australia have obtained a job using this pattern (Holton 1994 pg. 167). This appears to be a result of preference for other occupations. However, a major part involves wastage due to lack of recognition.

Upon the basis of the literature and the experiences of the researcher in working with the Sri Lankan community over several decades the following are suggested as possible barriers to gaining recognition for skills:

- ❖ Difficulties in comprehending the Australian English pronunciation and Australian phraseologies even though the migrants have learnt English in Sri Lanka;

- ❖ Mismatches between their qualifications/skills and the specific job market requirements; and
- ❖ Occasional racist or cultural prejudices. Healey argues that, 'for many ethnic communities in Australia, their over representatives in other ranks of unemployed (or under-employed) remains a matter of concern and racism cannot be discounted as a factor in the situation. Research studies show discrimination in employment against people from particular ethnic background, even when their qualifications are comparable with those of their competitors for the job' (Healey, 1997).

Wooden suggests that that one way of addressing these issues is via a study of qualified immigrants, drawn from a wide range of professionals and trades, facing different demand and supply constraints, which attempts to match skills-based competencies to actual utilisation of skills by immigrants.'(Wooden, 1994) (See Morrissey et al. 1992, pg.9)

Wooden's suggestion is to some extent similar to the scope of this project in which three skills category groups of trade persons, associate professionals and professionals are being investigated about their employment issues. Although a wide range of qualified immigrants are not drawn for investigation as envisaged by Wooden, the three groups for this project may throw some light into the issues so that other researchers could continue covering a wider range of qualified immigrants' problems related to employment.

None of the other writers who address the issue of migrant employment or labour market experiences (e.g. Corson, 1998; Flaten and Hemmings, 1991; Iredale, 1988; Holten & Lampugnani, 1989; Gamage, 1992; Robert & Williams, 1989; Sherrard, 1994; Shaw, 1995; Sedden, 1999; Troyna 1993; Tsolidis (1996; Waldren, 1999; Weerasooriya, 1988; Pinnawala. 1984; Freeman & Jupp, 1992; Swan, 1981; Endagama, 1981; Gunawardena; 1991) address the question of why they may fail in the interview processes. Colebatch (2005), Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2003) These and other writers (e.g. Robinson (2005), Houston & Chee Leung, 2005; Jupp, 1991; Lynch, 1987; Prince, 1992) have written on skilled migration issues, such as wasted talent and skills, recognition of qualification, permanent or temporary

workers, exploitation of migrant workers, talent and skills that are overlooked, regional settlements, the points system, unskilled labour, cultural differences, the interaction between qualifications and the labour market, recruiting practices and other issues relating to skilled immigrants in Australia. However, none of them directly investigate the labour market entry experience of migrant groups.

Brooks and Williams' research on immigrants' experiences suggest that age is a factor in the unemployment levels. They note that "at the aggregate level, irrespective of gender, unemployment rates in each age group are higher for those born overseas than for those born in Australia. As well, unemployment rates across all gender and birthplace groups are highest for those aged 15 to 24. This is consistent with the argument that those who have recently left the education system and have little work experience have the greatest difficulty getting a job."(Brooks and Williams, 1994).

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs in January 1996 acknowledged the lack of recognition and underutilisation of the skills and qualifications of migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds to Australia.

Upon the basis of the preliminary survey and interviews conducted for this research, the literature has not located the "hidden circumstances" in relation to employment seeking by the migrant skilled workers. These hidden circumstances can be described as the combination of every day experiences of the workers that relate to their migrant and non-English speaking status. Small incidents of difficulties with accents, a lack of understanding of the Australian idiom, cultural differences – including differences in humour, differences in social and work hierarchies, different constructs of social status, limited and possibly closed networks and lack of experiences with the physical and social infrastructure can all contribute to a sense of social and economic alienation. The combination of these small factors can contribute towards a growing sense of exclusion from occupations that had once provided the foundations for self-recognition, especially amongst males.

This study is mostly based upon a survey, as detailed in chapter 7. However, the study is based upon the experiences of the researcher in working in community

and social support within the Sri Lankan community. As a consequence a vast amount of knowledge of the social and economic experiences of Sri Lankan workers in Australia has been gained. This anecdotal knowledge has been formalised through the preliminary survey, focus groups and sample interviews. Some accounts of experiences of these workers can be used to complement the literature. Examples of such a narrative are as follows:

1. When some engineers arrived in Australia under skill migration, they may have faced an economic downturn and man associated a dearth of engineer positions in the job market. These engineers thus need to resort to less skilled work, such as from drivers or taxi drivers. When the economy recovers and engineer jobs are more available, then they have to face a situation in interviews where they fail due to lack of Australian workplace experience in the engineering industry. As a consequence they become depressed and frustrated, and with a family to support, they reluctantly continue with of the less skilled. This can lead to a spiral of pessimism, low employment expectation, and low investment in training and low levels of occupational mobility. (Unstructured interview with Dasaratha J –2004)

2. The Engineering degree from the University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka) is highly regarded in Australia. The engineering degree from the University of Moratuwa is also well recognised in Australia. Both degrees are rated well ahead of engineering degrees from other South East Asian countries and other countries in the Indian Sub-Continent. (Adikari 2003)

Most engineering graduates from Sri Lanka with about 10 years of experience have been able to find employment in Australia in their areas of expertise. However, when the engineers take up senior management positions in Sri Lanka, they gradually begin to lose touch with their technical skills. Therefore, someone at the age of 45 years who migrated from Sri Lanka would probably have been in a managerial position for about 10 years, and would have lost touch with the technology and technical skills. Consequently they tend to fail at the interviews in Australia. This problem is exacerbated by the more hierarchical nature of work places in Sri Lanka that leads to a tendency for senior managers to have less contact with the technical skills.

Often, Sri Lankan engineers who migrate to Australia at the age of 45 years or older do so to educate their children. In doing so, they make a very large personal sacrifice, as they will be unable to find engineering positions to their liking. They often end up switching their careers and never return to engineering again.

3. “I believe that one of the main reasons for having difficulties in getting a job for the professionals coming from Sri Lanka is the lack of presentation skills. We as Sri Lankans are lagging behind this skill very seriously. Our old education system provided only little room to develop our presentation skills. .

Therefore, compared to the Australian born Australians who developed their presentation skills right from kindergarten, we face real difficulty in presenting ourselves and marketing our skills in the job interviews and also in preparing our resumes when we first arrive in this country.

We have developed the skills required or at least have the capacity to get those skills very quickly compared to Australians. For example, when I first got my job, I have never used computers before (in Sri Lanka) even at the university stage. However, at the first job interview, I expressed positively that I would learn it quickly and get the required outcomes in a very short time. Having proved my capacity to pick the system up, after six months’ time, I was officially asked to train the other engineers on that complicated Highway design computer package. This is mainly because of the competitive environment we have been adopted in Sri Lanka. As competitors we always try to be the first. This is the main reason for Sri Lankan not to lose their job even under difficult situations such as restructuring processes. I believe that more than 95% of our community falls in this category irrespective of the discipline or the type of job we do. (Engineers, technicians, Doctors, German Training School trades certificate holders, Accountants, etc.) Almost every one of us does our jobs comparatively better than others because of the desire to face the competition that was developed through our education system. I believe that is one of the good aspects of our education system” (Milroy G, 2005)

4. An aspect of language problem

Many authors (e.g. Gamage, 1992) have written on the language problems of some skill immigrants in Australia. Most of skilled immigrants have studied English in Sri Lanka and most have passed a test in English. However, they are unable to comprehend the 'Australian' English. These immigrants get embarrassed at their lack of understanding of Australian colloquialism. The researcher has personally experienced this situation as the official interpreter for these Sri Lankans in courts, tribunals, WorkCover interviews and hospitals, etc.

6.3 Migration and Skilled Shortage:

There is a considerable literature on the historical role of migration in meeting industry skill needs in Australia (e.g. see Imp 1995; Beazley 2000; Castles 1989; Hawthorne 1992; Mitchell 1992; Smith 1994; Wooden, Mark 1994). More recently the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2003) has noted that "during the latter 1990s there was a considerable growth in the proportion of Skill stream migrants reflecting recent and on going Government emphasis on the economic benefits of skilled migration arrivals exceed Family stream arrivals in that year, a trend that has since continued. More recently changes to the selection process for skilled migrants, introduced in July 1999, have strengthened the points test requirements relating to skill level, age and English fluency, and increased emphasis on targeting migrants with specific skills which are in shortage in the Australian labour market." (p11). Currently there has been a major policy focus upon skill shortages and associated initiatives in apprenticeships and vocational colleges, and this has led to an even greater emphasis upon skilled migrants (Kerr, 2005).

Little of the literature deals with migrants from Southern Asia and Sri Lanka. Exceptions are Cox (1975); Gamage (1998); Pinnawala (1984); Endagama (1981); and Swan 1981, and Weerasooria 1988) examines early Sri Lankan immigration to Australia. However, this study is basically a historical account of early immigration. All of these studies are lacking empirical data and mainly deal on the cultural aspect.

The major trends and findings would be outlined in the following chapter 7.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS

7.0 SURVEY DETAILS

The study is advantaged by the location of about 50% Sri Lankan migrants who live in Victoria; the majority of whom reside in Melbourne. With the assistance of three alumni in Melbourne that represents the three levels of skilled immigrant (Sri Lankan) workers and that include about 40% of the related populations a sample of skilled migrant workers from the three alumni was approached to participate in the research.

The Sri Lankan born population in Victoria is small (23,571 in the 1996 census, and 26,676 in 2001), and the population of skilled workers in Melbourne is even smaller. As a consequence it is difficult to identify a sample of the population of skilled workers. Skilled workers have been defined in this study by their qualifications (degree, diploma and certificates). While these have been registered through NOOSA these registers are not available to the researcher. Other methods of identification, such as the use of a telephone directory for random sampling are of little use as they do not identify the category of subjects that were sought for this study.

Therefore, the alumni offered the best means of identifying and approaching the participants. The method used to select the study sample was to approach all relevant members of the alumni. This was supplemented with approaches through personal networks of the researcher. A total of 306 people were approached and a total of 115 usable surveys were returned. Details of the survey instrument are contained in the appendices. Details of the distribution of the returns by the three skills groups and age are shown in table 1.

7.1 Characteristics of the participants

Table 1: Age and skills Groups

Age	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
25-34	14	4	1
34-44	37	14	9
45-54	3	10	19
55-64	0	0	4
Total	54	28	33

The returns across the skills groups are probably representative of the populations, although this cannot be verified. It was expected that certificate holders would have the highest representation given the combined impact of skilled migrant and family re-union entry of the Sri Lankan population to Australia. However, there also has been a strong influx of professional or degree holding workers. The age distributions also might be taken as intuitive. It can be expected that engineers are likely to be older and would have been favoured by the skilled migrant categories, and that the certificate holders would be younger, either because they have yet to study for higher level qualifications or they entered the country under family reunion criteria.

The gender break up of the returns is shown below in table 2. The strong male bias is a result of the characteristics of the occupations, the nature of skills training in Sri Lanka, and possibly of the culture of the alumni in Australia. Because of the very low number of females the study analysis does not attempt to differentiate results by gender.

Table 2: Gender

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Male	52	26	32
Female	2	2	1
Total	54	28	33

The purpose of the study was to gain insights into the experience of Sri Lankan migrants in the Australian workplace. For this reason it was important to ensure that the sample population was representative of Sri Lankan migrants. Participants, therefore, were asked to nominate their fathers' birthplace. As shown in table 3 almost all were born in Sri Lanka. The only participant whose father was not born in Sri Lanka did come from Sri Lanka, so the entire sample can be regarded as meeting the broad criteria of Sri Lankan skilled migrants to Australia.

Table 3: Father's place of birth

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Sri Lanka	54	27	33
Other	0	1	0
Total	54	28	33

Participants were asked the year of their arrival in Australia, and the results are shown in table 4. There are some apparent contrasts with a high number of certificate holders arriving in 1994 and 1995, compared with a very small number of diploma and degree holders. There is no apparent reason for this; although it could suggest the migration patterns have been influenced by networks.

Table 4: Year of arrival in Australia

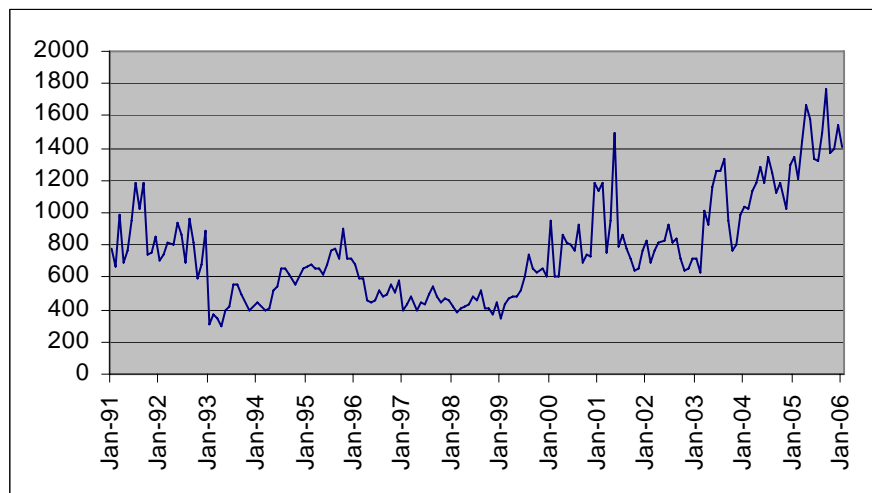
	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
1980-1989	5	2	8
1990	7	5	5
1991	7	2	4
1992	1	4	3
1993	0	2	0
1994	11	2	0
1995	14	3	2
1996	2	1	1
1997	3	1	1
1998	0	2	2
1999	1	1	1
2000	0	2	2
2001	1	0	2
2002	1	1	2
N/A	1	0	0
Total	54	28	33

Another factor could be changes in immigration policy. The shift towards skilled and economic migrant intakes could be reflected in an increased percentage of diploma and degree holders. Overall the number of migrants (Figure 1) have followed similar patterns to the data in table 4, with the exception that the number of workers in the study who arrived in Australia over the past decade is small. This

could be due to a smaller number of recent migrants who have joined the alumni. This does potentially bias the sample. However the bulk of the participants in the survey have been in Australia for a decade or more and thus have an extensive experience in the Australian employment market. This provides a stronger basis for expressions of their experiences.

It should be noted that the patterns of arrival cover a major economic cycle. While most arrived the recession of the early 1990s a significant number arrived before or during it. It is likely that the two groups of migrants would have faced quite different employment market circumstances.

Figure 1: Immigration: permanent movements – Southern Asia, 1991-2006



Source: ABS, Cat. No. 3412.0

There is a similar homogeneity in the language background of the participants. All but one have Sinhalese as their first language. This is not representative of the Sri Lankan population (although it is the majority language) and would be due to the network characteristics of the alumni. This is related to the location and enrolments in the training and education institutions in Sri Lanka, the patterns of Sri Lankan residence in Australia – where Sinhalese migrants have clustered in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, and the network characteristics of the alumni. Strictly speaking therefore, the study concerns the experience of Sinhalese migrants in the Australian labour market.

Table 5: Language(s) first spoken

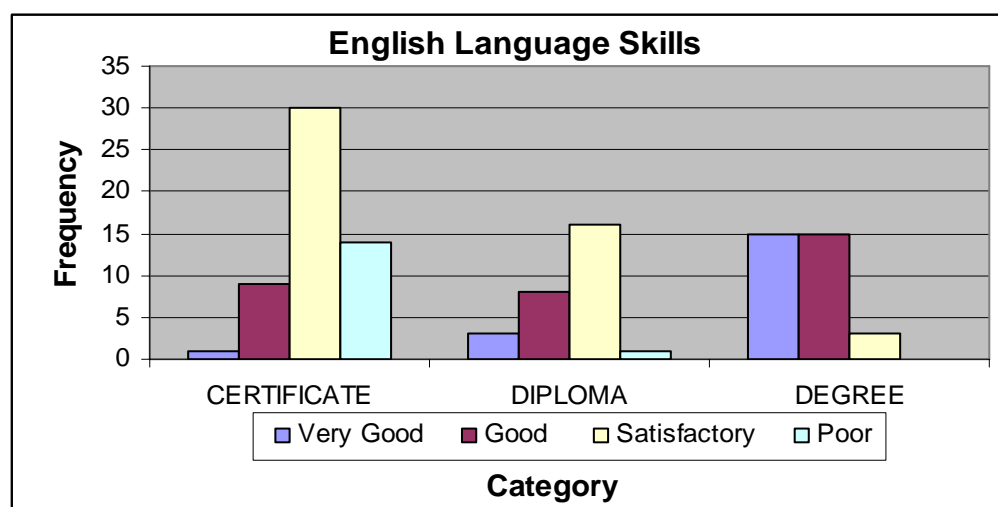
	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Sinhalese	54	28	32
Tamil	0	0	1
Total	54	28	33

Participants were asked which country they migrated from. Almost 15% migrated from countries other than Sri Lanka. Most of these people came from the UK. However, most had previously migrated from Sri Lanka.

Table 6: From which country did you emigrate

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Sri Lanka	48	21	29
Other	6	7	4
Total	54	28	33

Participants were asked to assess their English language skills. This question was asked as poor language skills would be a possible reason for negative labour market experiences. The results are shown in figure 2. The results are fairly intuitive with certificate and diploma holders assessing mainly as satisfactory and degree holders as good or very good. Over a quarter of certificate holders regarded their skills as poor.

Figure 2: Self assessment of English language skills

It should also be noted that, English language skills would encompass the understanding of Australia accents, Australian colloquialisms, humour, slang and culture. Therefore, most will still find it difficult to communicate as it takes a long time to grasp the Australian English language. It is also worth mentioning that to know English language is a status symbol in Sri Lanka, as such in responding to this question some of them may have given the incorrect answer.

The participants were asked if they had undertaken formal study since they left school. As shown in table 7 all of the participants were formally qualified. The results represent the highest qualification that was gained, and would include some degree holders who had completed a lower level qualification as well.

Table 7: Qualifications obtained since you left school

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Certificate	54	0	0
Diploma	0	28	2
Uni Degree	0	0	26
Post-degree diploma	0	0	1
Masters Degree	0	0	4
Total	54	28	33

Less than 12% of the participants gained their qualifications outside of Sri Lanka. Of those who did only three certificate holders gained them in Australia. Of interest is that three degree holders gained their qualification in Russia. This suggests the impact of networks. The network aspect is also suggested by the fact that the bulk of certificate holders from the German technical training institution in Sri Lanka. A smaller number gained them from the technical training institution.

It is difficult to compare the patterns of institutions and types of qualifications with held by Australian born workers. A lack of apprenticeship training would disadvantage some types of workers in the Australian labour market. However, for this study skilled workers have been defined and differentiated by qualification type (certificates, diplomas and degrees) only. A more comprehensive comparison of apprenticeship backgrounds of workers in different occupations would be needed to consider this question. With the high rate of occupational exits amongst

apprenticeship graduates in Australia and the sampling limitations of the study such comparisons would be likely to prove fruitless.

Table 8: Where qualifications were gained

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Sri Lanka	51	26	25
Australia	3	0	0
Russia	0	0	3
Other	0	1	2
UK	0	0	3
N/A	0	1	0
Total	54	28	33

Figure 3: Type (name) of training institution

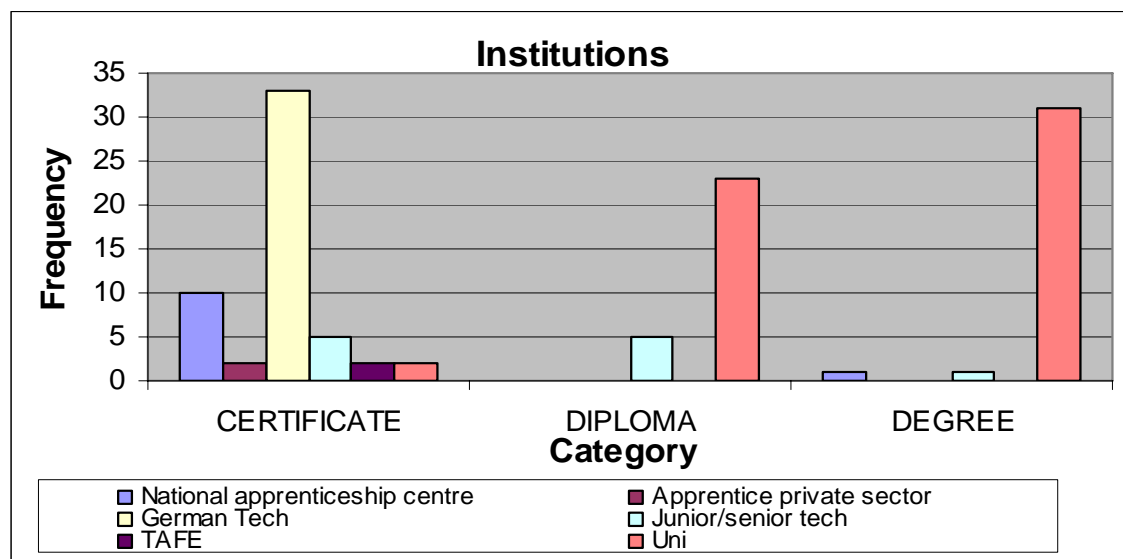
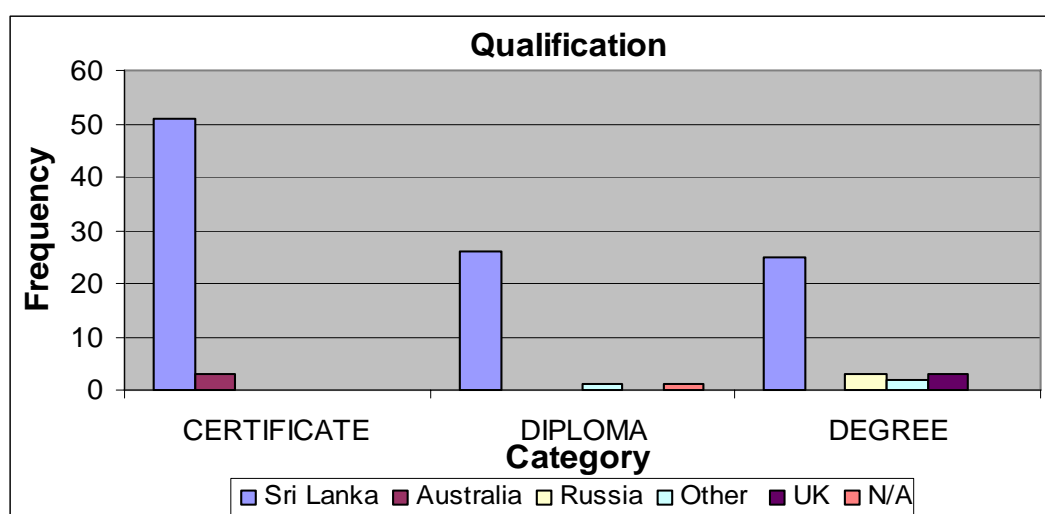


Figure 4: Location of the training institution



Only a small (9) percentage of the participants were undertaking full or part-time study. This percentage (8.5%) is similar to that for the overall adult working age population in Australia (7.4%), but below the levels for immigrants, which tend to be higher than those for locally born populations. This is shown in the 2001 census that shows rates for people with non English speaking backgrounds which are double those for the locally born population (table 10).

Table 9: Whether doing any Full Time or Part Time study or apprenticeship?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	4	3	3
No	48	24	29
N/A	2	1	1
Total	54	28	33

Table 10: Participation in Education and Training, population with language other than English

	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Language other than English spoken at home (a)	51.6	19.0	11.1	6.4	3.7	22.5
Total (b)(c)	35.7	16.2	11.5	8.0	5.4	20.2

Source: ABS: Cat. No. 4230.0

The degree holders in study were full-time, while the other six participants were part-time, as shown in table 11, and all participants were doing this because of employment pressure. This would be expected given the male dominance of the group. The low levels of participation may be attributed to the fact that all of the participants were already qualified. However, participants in adult education typically are better qualified than non-participants. It may be that there is a limited perception of occupational movement or career advancement amongst the participant group, compared to other migrant groups.

Table 11: Full Time or Part Time

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Full Time	0	0	2
Part Time	3	3	0
N/A	51	25	31
Total	54	28	33

Table 12: Reasons for studying Part Time rather than Full Time?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Have to work for living & study	2	3	1
N/A	52	25	32
Total	54	28	33

The areas of participation are not very revealing. The numbers are very small and they include both occupational (engineering) training and more generalist training (IT and management) (table 13)

Table 13: Main area of current study or training

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
IT/Computers	1	1	1
Management	0	1	1
Engineering	2	1	1
N/A	51	25	30
Total	54	28	33

A larger percentage of the participants had previously studied in Australia, as shown in table 14. The pattern across the three groups is not significant, although the figure

for diploma holders is low. Once again, given the average length of time that the participants have been in Australia the figures are low compared with all overseas born workers. Reasons for these low levels of participation could include a relative dependency upon the alumni for economic networks or a view on the part of the workers that lack of formal education and qualifications is not a significant barrier to their employment opportunities.

Table 14: Whether previously studied in Australia.

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	8	2	8
No	45	26	20
N/A	1	0	5
Total	54	28	33

There is a similar balance between occupational and generalist training for those who have previously studied. Occupational training is stronger for certificate holders and generalist training is stronger for the degree holders, and it might be assumed that typical of locally born workers the occupational mobility of the degree holders is greater with opportunities to move into management positions.

Only one certificate holder indicated that he had previously studied English. This suggests that the high levels of self reported English skills (see figure 2) are relatively accurate

Table 15: What was studied in Australia

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
IT/Computers	2	1	2
Management	0	1	5
Engineering	4	0	3
English	1	0	0
N/A	47	26	23
Total	54	28	33

Of the participants 9 indicated that they were not currently in some form of employment. There were 9 invalid returns amongst the certificate holders. It is

difficult to speculate on these returns. It could be random, or because some of these participants were unwilling to record that they were not in work.

Table 16: Whether in a job, a small business, any other work or self-employed?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	42	26	28
No	3	2	4
N/A	9	0	1
Total	54	28	33

Participants were asked to indicate the type of employment that they undertook. This was asked as an open question, rather than as responses to a list of categories. The responses were subsequently classified by the researcher, and the results are summarised in table 17. Each set of responses is then depicted in figures 5, 6 and 7, respectively. Figures 5, 6 and 7 subsequently include data for the certificate holders, diploma holders and degree holders, respectively.

Table 17: Type of work?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Undertake work at home: car repairs	11	1	0
Undertake work at home: welding	5	0	0
Undertake work at home: electrical	8	2	0
Self-employed: hire out tour-van or mini bus	0	1	1
Self-employed: milk bar	2	2	1
Self-employed: engineering consultant	0	1	4
Self-employed: engineering contract worker	2	2	2
Casual work	12	3	5
IT	0	2	1
Data management	1	1	3
Engineer	0	2	0
Senior engineer	0	0	3
Taxi/bus/train/tram driver	0	2	1
Telecommunications worker	0	2	1
Building design/construction	0	1	0
Carer	0	2	0
Undertake work at home: provide tuition	0	1	1
Checkout operator	1	1	0
Nursing	0	0	1
Self Employed	0	0	1
N/A	12	2	8
Total	54	28	33

One purpose of the study is to compare the type of employment held by the participants with their qualifications levels. It should be noted that all of the

participants have qualifications that are formally recognised in Australia. This compares with overall patterns of qualifications in the Australian workforce. Patterns of post school qualifications in Australia are shown below. It can be seen that percentages with certificates and above range from a third to just over half the working age population. Levels for males are about 3% higher than for the overall population. In this sense, therefore, the participants are an elite group

Table 18: Qualifications of 20-54 year olds, Australia, 2001

	20-24	25-34	34-44	44-54	25-64
Highest Level of Educational Attainment					
Bachelor degree or above	14.1	24.0	19.8	19.2	19.7
Advanced diploma and diploma	6.5	7.8	7.7	7.8	7.6
Certificate III and IV	12.2	16.2	17.4	15.1	16.0
Certificate I and II	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.4	1.1
Certificate not further defined	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Year 12	44.0	22.0	15.0	12.2	15.3
Year 11 or below	22.1	27.9	37.6	42.6	38.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100

Source: ABS, Cat. No. 4230.0

This is shown by the relative rates of unemployment and labour force participation of the different categories of qualification holders. Unemployment rates are lower and participation rates are higher for both degree holders and diploma and certificate holders than for those without post school qualifications and for the overall working age population.

Table 19: Unemployment and labour force participation rates by qualification level, 15-64 year olds, 2001, Australia.

	Advanced diploma, diploma certificate	Bachelor or_degree above	Did orCompleted Year 12	not complete Year 12	Total
Unemployment	5.7	2.8	7.5	10.8	6.9
Participation rates	83.0	87.3	76.8	62.2	75.2

Source: ABS, Cat. No. 4230.0

The survey returns show that certificate qualified migrants held mostly casual jobs, and possibly semi-informal jobs in the form of car repairs in which they work from home. It is likely that this work is highly network based, and may indicate difficulties in accessing the formal labour market. It is likely (but not certain) that at least some of these workers are qualified in their skills area, yet in a period of supposed skills shortages appear to have difficulties in the formal labour market. Other types of jobs held include welding and electrical, which are also home based milk bars, engineering, data management and checkout operator. Overall it appears that certificate holders have relatively high levels of informal and home based work.

In the diploma category, there is a greater spread of jobs held, ranging from self employed, casual positions to engineers and telecommunications workers. Degree holders also have a high spread of jobs, although the number of casual workers and non-returns is quite high.

In summary, certificate holders are skewed towards self employment, where most of them work from home, as compared to the diploma holders and degree holders. The latter two groups, on the other hand, held positions in other areas, mainly engineering related fields. Overall, casual work has the highest rates across the three groups.

Figure 5: Job Status details for the Certificate Category

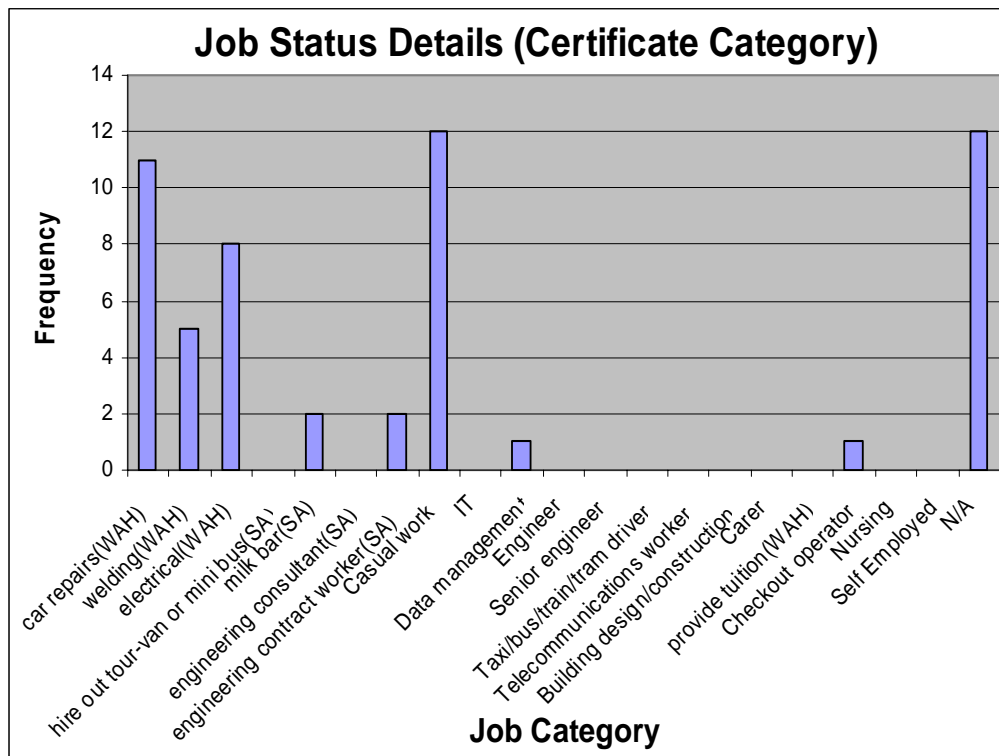


Figure 6: Job Status details for the Diploma Category

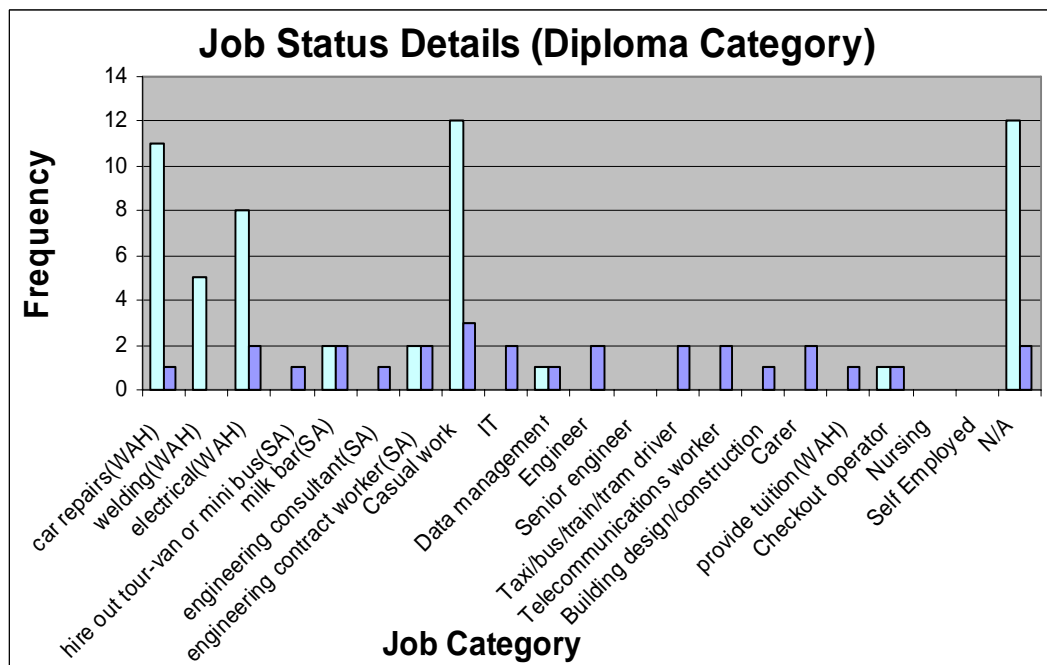
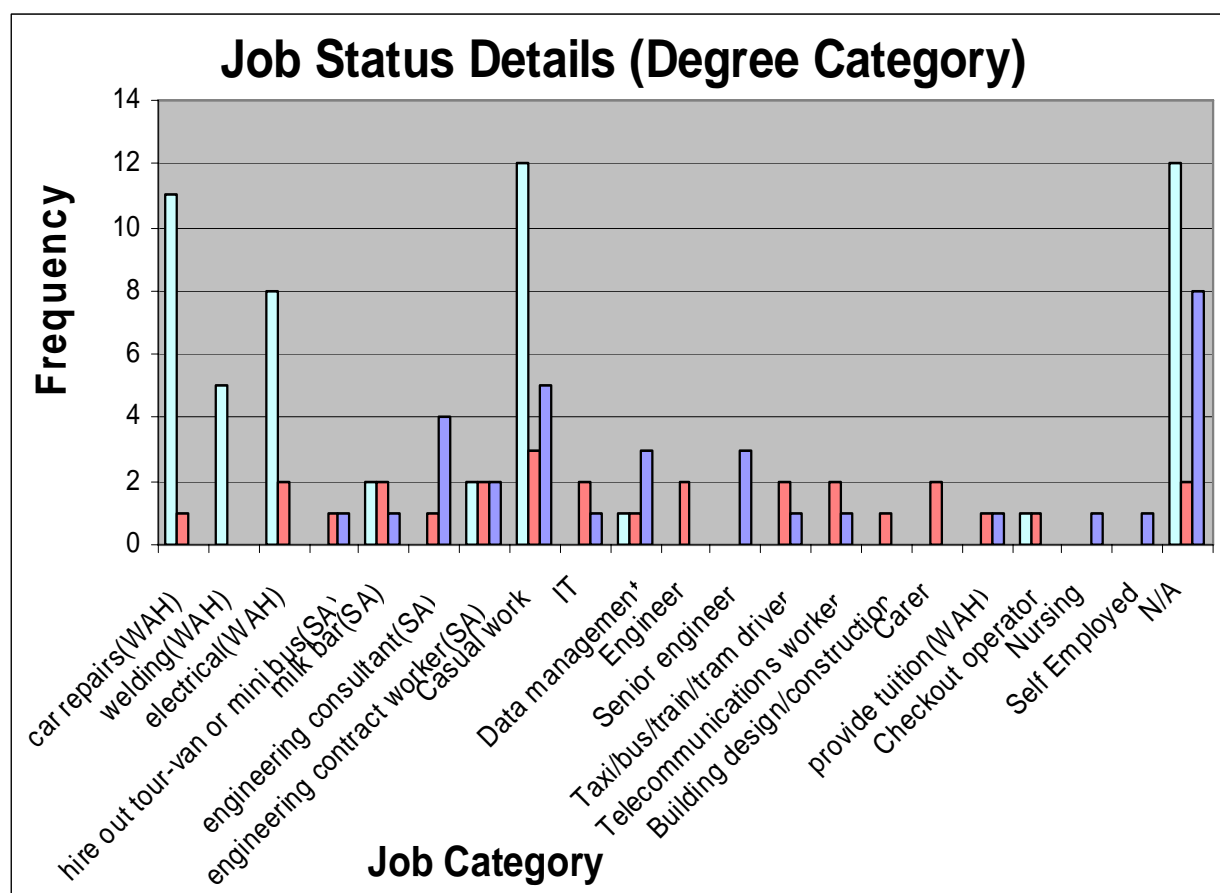


Figure 7: Job Status details for the Degree Category



A further criterion of employment status is whether in part-time employment, and whether those in part-time employment would prefer to work longer hours. In 2004 (when the survey of skilled migrants was conducted) the percentage of part-time employed male of all employed males was 15.8% in Australia, with 6.6% unemployed. In 2004 29.1% of part-time male workers wanted to work more hours (ABS, Cat. No. 6265.0.)

Comparisons, therefore can be made with the sample of Sri Lankan migrant workers. They were asked if they worked part-time, and if so would they prefer to work full-time. The results are shown in table 20. Overall 34 or 29% of Sri Lankan workers indicated that they worked part-time. This is a third higher than for the overall male workforce. However, the greatest difference is in the 85% of part-time Sri Lankan workers who would prefer to work full-time, compared with the 29% for all workers who would prefer to work more hours, and 20.1% who would prefer to work full-time.

Table 20: If Part Time, would you prefer to work Full Time

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	17	11	6
No(Voluntary)	1	2	3
N/A	36	15	24
Total	54	28	33

Participants were then asked if they had experienced difficulties in gaining a full – time job. The results are shown in table 21, and indicate that 80% of valid returns had a positive response to this question. Comparative data for the overall workforce are not available. However, as the question was relatively open it could be that a similar high level of positive responses would also be the case for all workers.

Of significance, however, is that responses were relatively even across the three groups of participants. The rate of part-time employment amongst degree holders is very high, and most felt that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining full-time work. Therefore, the results, while not emphatic strongly suggest employment market difficulties for skilled Sri Lankan migrants.

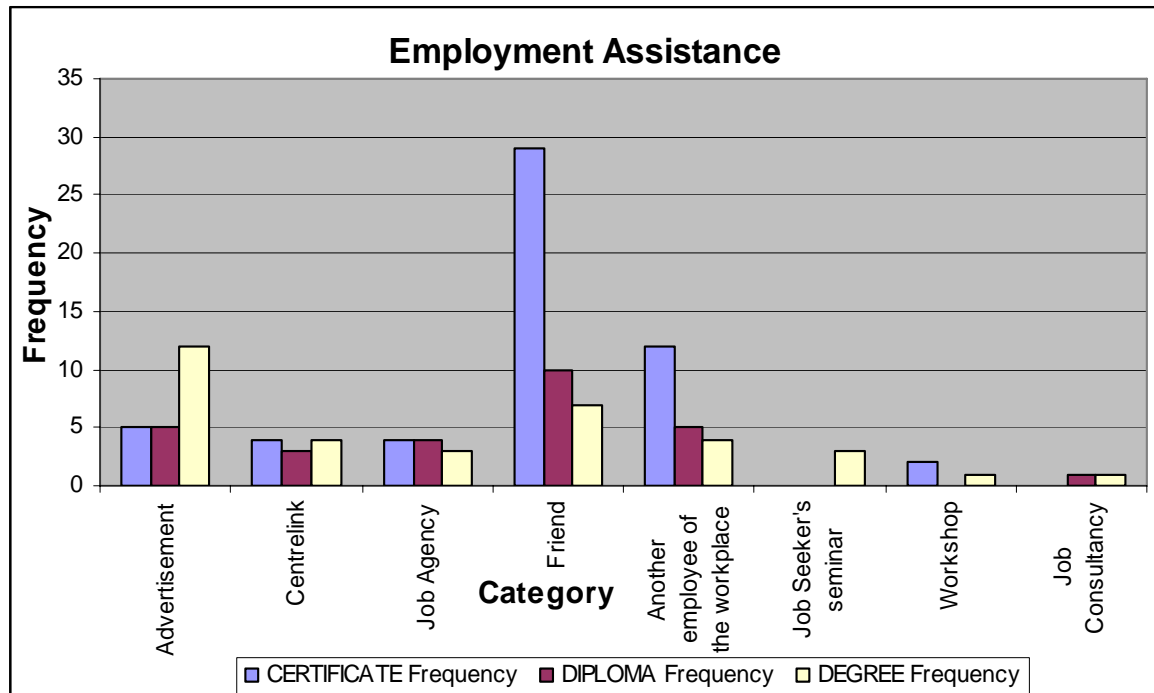
Table 21: Have you had any trouble finding a full time job?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	40	22	23
No	12	4	5
N/A	2	2	5
Total	54	28	33

Participants were asked what factors assisted them in gaining employment and the results are shown in figure 8. It can be seen that most relied upon forms of networks – friends or another employee. The high proportion of certificate holders that relied upon networks is consistent with certificate holders in Australia (see Keating et al, 2005), and in other relatively unregulated labour markets. It is also consistent with patterns in trade based occupations.

However, the primary reliance upon networks of over half of the participants is very high, even for males in engineering occupations. This might suggest that Sri Lankan migrants have a heavy reliance upon networks, and this is consistent with some of the previous results, including the low levels of participation in further education and training and the low levels of formal employment.

Figure 8: Employment Assistance

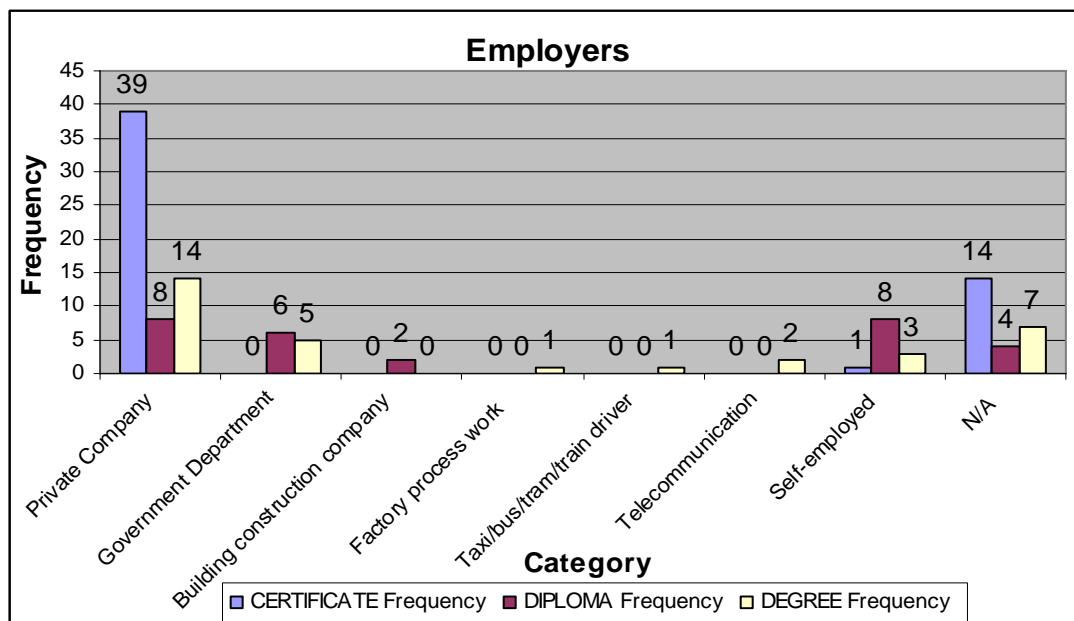


In contrast with question 22, approximately 70% of the survey respondents hold positions with private enterprise where more jobs are available in private manufacturing companies.

Table 22: Who is your employer?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Private Company	39	8	14
Government Department	0	6	5
Building construction company	0	2	0
Factory process work	0	0	1
Taxi/bus/tram/train driver	0	0	1
Telecommunication	0	0	2
Self-employed	1	8	3
N/A	14	4	7
Total	54	28	33

Figure 9

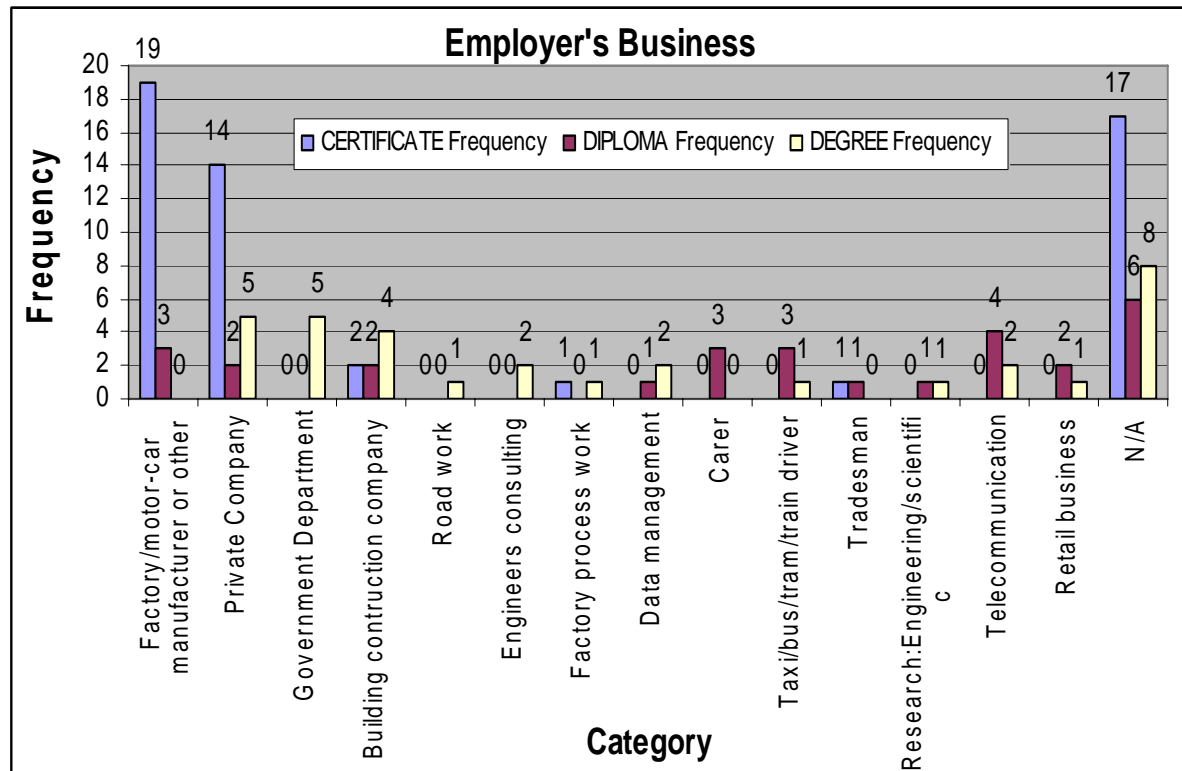


The highest number of survey respondents work in private companies, contributing 53% of the total frequency, the most, being certificate qualified skilled migrant category.

Table 23: What is your employer's main type of business?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Factory/motor-car manufacturer or other manufacturer	19	3	0
Private Company	14	2	5
Government Department	0	0	5
Building construction company	2	2	4
Road work	0	0	1
Engineers consulting	0	0	2
Factory process work	1	0	1
Data management	0	1	2
Carer	0	3	0
Taxi/bus/tram/train driver	0	3	1
Tradesman	1	1	0
Research: Engineering/scientific	0	1	1
Telecommunication	0	4	2
Retail business	0	2	1
N/A	17	6	8
Total	54	28	33

Figure 10



This question allows a general understanding on the types of businesses which provide the job market for the survey respondents. One of the main types of business is in the factory/motor-car manufacturing or other manufacturing sector followed by private companies (as seen in Figure 10 in question 24). These sectors are mainly occupied by the certificate level qualified migrants while others have found jobs in which their employer are engaged in various types of businesses. Such business includes government departments, building construction companies, road works, engineers consulting, factory process work, data management, carer, public transport drivers, tradesman, research based, telecommunications and retail businesses. A fairly large number of responses towards not specifying their employer's main type of business probably indicate that they are self-employed.

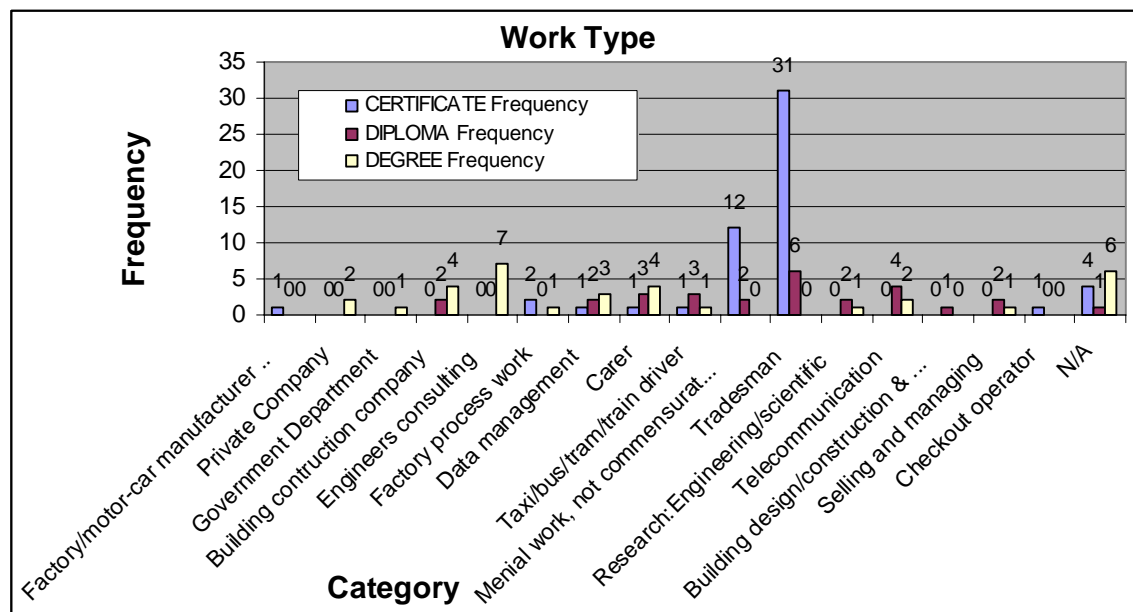
The following question, however, further examines the type of work the survey respondents holds in their respective jobs.

The group was asked to nominate their kind of work and the responses are in table 24 and Figure 11. It can be seen that the work is very mixed for the degree and diploma holders, but 62% of the certificate holders indicated that they were tradesmen. This could have several implications. This may lead to, or it may be because a large number of the certificate holders are self employed. It could limit their employment and occupational mobility, especially when combined with their poorer English language skills. And it could create a degree of skills redundancy or mismatch given that these workers had their trade training in Sri Lanka.

Table 24: Kind of work

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Factory/motor-car manufacturer or other manufacturer	1	0	0
Private Company	0	0	2
Government Department	0	0	1
Building construction company	0	2	4
Engineers consulting	0	0	7
Factory process work	2	0	1
Data management	1	2	3
Carer	1	3	4
Taxi/bus/tram/train driver	1	3	1
Menial work, not commensurate with qualifications	12	2	0
Tradesman	31	6	0
Research:Engineering/scientific	0	2	1
Telecommunication	0	4	2
Building design/construction & related tuition	0	1	0
Selling and managing	0	2	1
Checkout operator	1	0	0
N/A	4	1	6
Total	54	28	33

Figure 11



Participants were asked if they were looking to change their jobs. The results are shown in table 25 and indicate that 36.5% were looking to change jobs. In 2004 14% of employed workers in Australia changed jobs (ABS Cat. No. 6209.0). Of course job mobility is a combination of forced mobility and opportunities taken by workers to change jobs, and cannot be equated with a desire to change jobs. A proportion of the labour force would be involuntarily stable in their employment. Nevertheless the percentage of the sample that is looking to change jobs can be regarded as quite high and suggests a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with their employment.

Table 25 : looking to change job

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	19	11	8
No	30	16	20
N/A	5	1	5
Total	54	28	33

The participants were asked to indicate the reasons for wanting to change jobs. The results were coded and are presented in table 26. The participants were able to list more than one reason and this accounts for the 99 recordings from the 38

participants. The main reasons were a general comment about a lack of job satisfaction and that the work was not related to the qualifications that were held and lack of career prospects. Of interest is that a significant number of certificate holders indicated language and racial prejudice problems. These factors were comparatively absent amongst diploma and degree holders. These data suggest some differentiation between categories of workers. The certificate holders have tended to face greater language related problems. This corresponds to the self assessments of English language skills (figure 2).

Table 26: Reason for change in job

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Not related to my qualifications or experience	10	9	4
Mistreatment	2	0	0
Poor career prospects	9	4	5
No job satisfaction	11	5	4
Racial prejudices- by supervisor	6	2	0
Racial prejudices- by co-workers	8	1	0
Language problems	8	0	0
Communications problems	6	0	0
Australian Accent	2	2	0
Other reasons	0	1	0
Total	62	24	13

Workers were asked if they had experienced difficulties in gaining employment in Australia, and the results are shown in table 27. Of the valid returns 84% indicated that they had experienced difficulties. It would not be surprising that many if not most immigrants would face difficulties in gaining employment, and indeed a large percentage of new labour market entrants in Australia would also face difficulties. However, the percentage of positive responses is very high and suggests that either migrants or this group of migrants have faced significant barriers in gaining employment. Of interest is that the results are relatively even across the three groups of workers.

Table 27: Had difficulties getting a job in Australia.

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	43	24	28
No	8	4	5
N/A	3	0	0
Total	54	28	33

The participants were asked to nominate the main reasons for the difficulties in gaining work. The results are shown in table 28. They indicate that over half of the group felt that lack of work experience in Australian workplaces was the main reason for employment difficulties. Respondents were able to nominate more than one criteria, and the cumulative results are shown in figure 13, and they indicate that 89 of the 155 valid responses nominated this as one of the difficulties in gaining employment.

Table 28: Reasons for the difficulties in getting a job in Australia

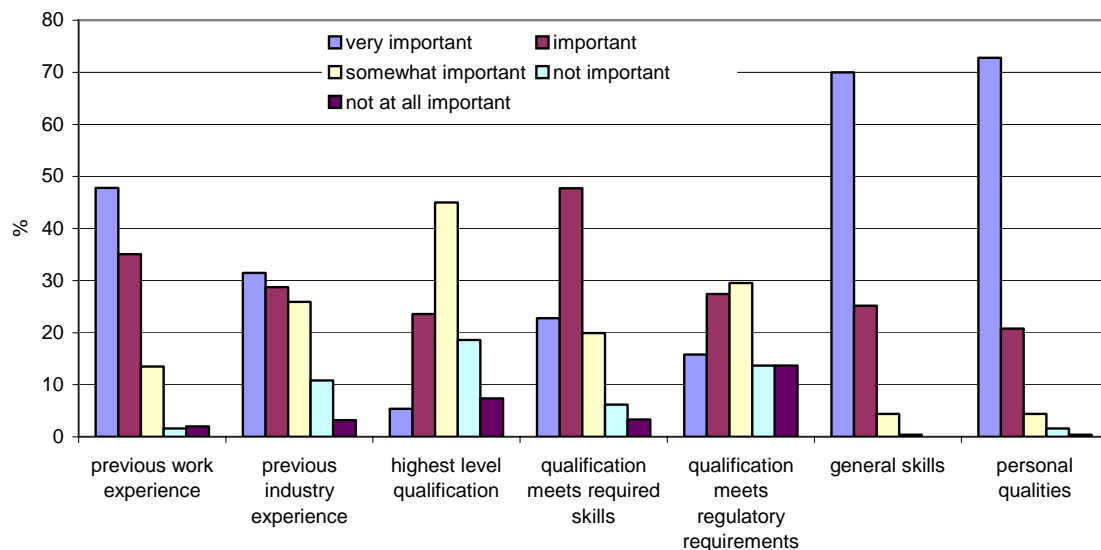
	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Qualifications	1 (1.9%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (8.6%)
Language barrier	14 (26.4%)	4 (12.1%)	1 (2.9%)
Cultural prejudices	8 (15.1%)	7 (21.2)	8 (22.9%)
Age barrier	1 (1.9%)	0	4 (11.4%)
Gender	1 (1.9%)	0	0
Unsuccessful at interviews	5 (9.4%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (2.9%)
Lack experience in Australia	26 (49.1)	20 (60.6%)	17 (48.6%)
New techniques due to globalisation	0	0	0
Others	0	0	1 (2.9%)
Total	56	33	35

In one sense this result is not especially unusual, and they complement the findings of Keating et al (2005) who found that the main criteria used by employers in recruiting labour was previous work experience and previous work experience in their industry (see figure 13). However, in this study it was found that the criterion of former work experience was considerably stronger for low qualified workers than for highly qualified workers. The survey of Sri Lankan migrants, however, shows a relatively

even response across the three skills categories. In fact there is a slightly stronger response to this criteria amongst the degree and diploma holders compared with the certificate holders.

There are several possible reasons for this. It may be that many employers regard experience in Australian workplace as a threshold requirement. There is evidence that employers regard qualifications as a threshold requirement in some occupations, whereas work and industry experience are typically used as screening criteria (see Brown and Sessions, 1999). This is influenced by licensing and other regulations, and by the type of job. Typically public sector, professional and para professional occupations use qualifications as a threshold qualification, and only 5 of the participants indicated that qualifications had been the main barrier.

Figure 12: Importance of criteria for selection of employees for clerical, sales and service occupations (%)



Source: Keating et al, 2005, figure13

However, it is possible that some or even most employers use work experience in Australia as threshold requirements for immigrant workers. That is they may use work experience in Australia as evidence of induction into Australian work cultures, language capacity, and other generalist criteria that are typically associated with lower skilled employment. The large percentage of certificate holders that indicated that

lack of Australian work experience may not be surprising, and corresponds with employers' criteria when recruiting lower skilled labour. However, it is high and the corresponding figures for diploma and degree holders are especially high.

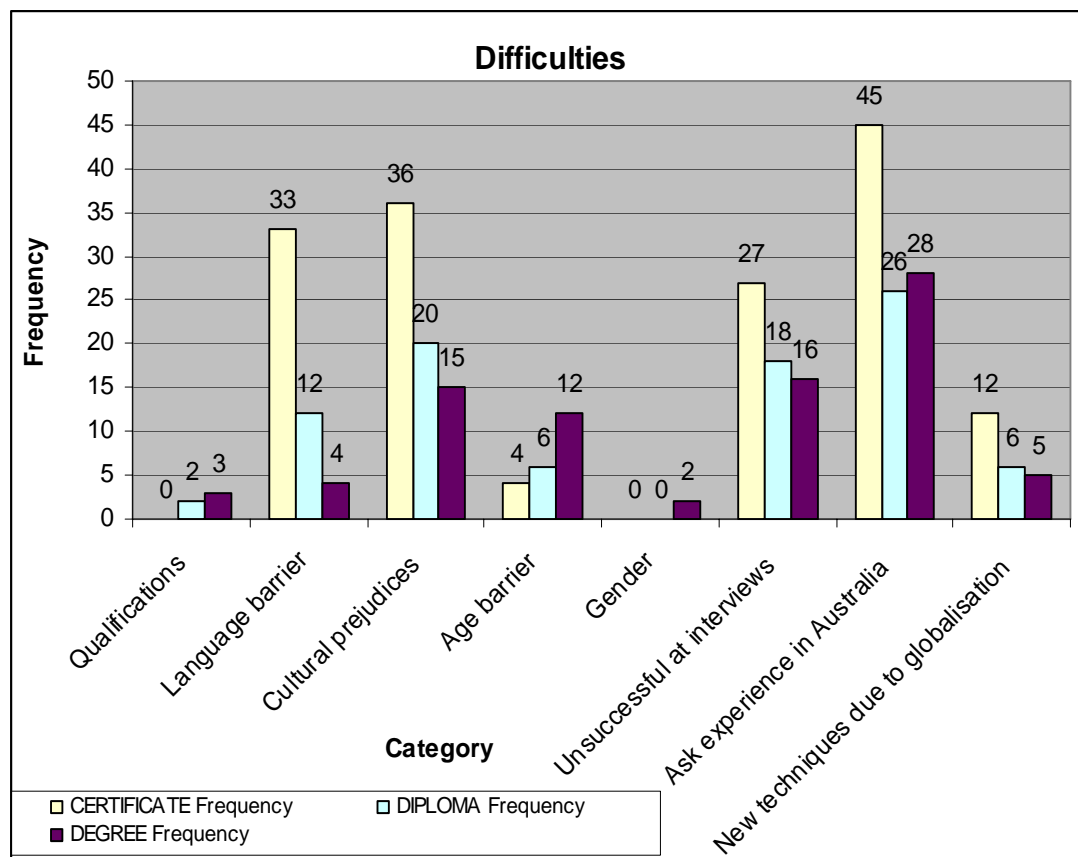
It should be noted that over half of the participants arrived in Australia after the recession of the early 1990s and that a large percentage of the group are working in industry areas and occupations that do not match their qualifications skills sets. There is a strong policy view from Australian governments and from industry of an acute skills shortage in Australia, including shortages in the automotive industry, where a large number of the Sri Lankan workers have their qualifications. There are contested views on the extent of skills shortages in Australia (e.g. Shah and Burje, 2003). However, there has been a decline in engineering employment, and Smith (2002) estimates that there was a decline of 15.8% over the ten year to 1999 and a decline of 3.2% in the metals trades in the five years to 1979.

Borthwick et al (2000) reported that there had been a decline of employment in the automotive trades of 15,000 in the decade to 1999, and that it was likely that the *“most pressing causes of skill shortages are those related to up skilling of the automotive repairs and service workforce and attracting suitable new entrants to that workforce, in line with changes experienced within the sector.”* (p2) These circumstances would disadvantage migrant labour, and especially considering the relatively out dated training in Sri Lanka. This conclusion, however, does not match the perceptions of the Sri Lankan migrants. Nevertheless it may be that employers interpret experience in the Australian workplace as experience in the more advanced automotive trade requirements.

Richardson (2001) et al found that there had been a substantial improvement in the labour market experience of recently arrived migrants, compared with earlier migrants. Attributes that contributed to successful labour market experiences with being male, English language capacity, being employed prior to migration, and having previously visited Australia. However they also found that overall migrants were not likely to have used their qualifications in the jobs that they did obtain. As well Shah (2005) has found that most migrants suffer an initial downward occupational mobility. These finds would seem to be consistent with the experiences of some of the Sri

Lankan engineering migrants, especially those with degree and diploma qualifications. The decline in engineering employment also may partially explain the low percentages of the alumni that are recent arrivals in Australia.

Figure 13: Reasons for the difficulties in getting a job in Australia, cumulative results



The participants were also asked to nominate the amount of work experience that they had in mother country or another country (table 29). The results show that the vast majority had five or more years. It is significant, therefore, that such a large number have nominated lack of Australian work experience as the main barrier. This further suggests that for employers Australian work experience for migrant workers carries signals related to skill types and obsolescence.

Table 29: Amount of work experience in mother country or another country?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
3 years	0	1	0
4 years	2	2	0
5 or more years	41	24	32
N/A	11	1	1
Total	54	28	33

Richardson et al (2001) provide information about the problems that two groups of migrants faced in finding work in Australia. The results are shown in table 30 and can be compared with those for our survey of Sri Lankan migrants. They indicate that English language difficulties have been a greater problem than for the Sri Lankan group, but that insufficient local experience is a relatively small problem across all migrant groups.

Apart from the countries of origin there are differences between these two sets of data. The Sri Lankan group are almost all male, confined to the engineering field (in relation to qualifications); all have post school qualifications and have arrived in Australia over different periods. Nevertheless the comparisons do suggest that there is something special about the experiences of the Sri Lankan group, with the heavy emphasis upon lack of Australian work experience. It seems likely that in the context of a decline in the engineering trades, and given the period of arrival of these migrants to Australia, those employers are using experience in the workplace as a sifting measure when there is a relative abundance of supply of these skills. It might be argued that the differences are related to the existence of greater problems of English language difficulties, lack of jobs, and non-recognition of qualifications amongst the general immigrant community.

Table 30: Problems that migrants had in finding work

Problem	Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
	Wave 1	Wave 1\2	Wave 3	Wave 1
English language difficulties	34	38	30	20
Qualifications not recognised	6	5	3	5
Lack of training experience	9	8	10	8
Not enough jobs	16	14	14	9
No particular problem	11	5	-	22
Insufficient local experience	8	14	12	24
Discrimination	4	6	5	2
Other	13	11	25	26

Source: Richardson et al (2001) table 9, p57

In regards to this question some comparisons can be made between the Sri Lankan group and all migrants. Table 31 below drawn from Richardson et al (2001) shows the main activity of migrants before and after their arrival in Australia. Of those who were employed before migration only between 6.9 and 11.9% were unemployed 6 months after arrival. While direct comparisons cannot be made the data do suggest that the labour market experience of Sri Lankan migrants is no better than those for all migrants. Amongst the 115 Sri Lankan workers in the survey those not in work were only 8.6%. However over 40% either work at home or were in casual work. Therefore, it would seem that the labour market experiences of this group have been especially poor.

Table 31: Main activity of migrants prior to and six months after arrival in Australia

	Wage & salary	Own business	Other employed	Unemployed	Student	Home duties	Retired, pensioner	Other	Total
Wage, salary	56.3	3.3	1.9	11.5	10.9	13.7	8.8	1.5	61.5
Own business	33.1	21.5	0.6	6.9	13.3	11.1	2.5	11.0	10.7
Other employed	37.0	1.5	5.2	11.5	25.1	17.2	1.8	0.7	2.0
Unemployed	15.9	n.a.	1.0	20.1	37	21	1.2	3.9	2.0
Student	31.8	1.3	1.4	6.8	36.0	21.7	n.a.	1.0	6.1
Home duties	9.5	1.4	1.6	1.1	13.8	70.8	1.3	1,0	11.8
Retired, pensioner	0.9	n.a.	0.9	1.8	1.0	12.9	81.1	1.4	3.0
Other	22.4	n.a.	n.a	20.9	31.2	9.8	10.7	5.1	1.8
Total	43.1	4.6	1.7	9.8	14.0	20.8	3.6	2.5	100

Source: Richardson et al (2001) table 3, p36

There could be a couple of reasons for this. First they include the fact that all of the 115 workers in the sample have trained in engineering, and especially automotive, and most worked in these areas in Sri Lanka. There seems to be some basis for this, as discussed above. Second it could be due to some limitations in networks for these groups. It could be that the alumni have weakened occupational mobility for the group, and has led a large percentage of the group to undertake casual and home based work that in turn depends upon the group for its custom.

One test of this second explanation is to compare the methods used by the group to find employment with the methods used by all migrants. Data from Richardson et al (2001) are shown in table 32. They indicate that the main methods have been through friends and family, self arranged, and the English language media. Networks, therefore, are important for migrants (as they are for Australian born workers). However, they are not as important as they are for the study group where 58% cited some form of network as the main method of locating employment.

Table 32: How migrant workers found work

	Cohort 1		Cohort	
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 1
English language media	21	23	21	17
Ethnic media	2	1	2	3
Sponsor	4	-	1	2
Employment Nat	6	7	5	2
Centrelink	-	-	-	-
Other employment agency	7	6	8	18
Arranged pre arrival	11	-	-	8
Family	11	10	11	8
Friend	16	28	21	17
Arranged myself	17	19	25	21

Source: Richardson et al (2001) table 10, p59

As a means of further checking the level of job satisfaction the participants were asked if they were registered with an employment agency. The results are shown in table 33 and indicate that over half of the group are registered. This is despite the fact that employment agencies have been a poor source of employment access for the group (figure 8) and does suggests that there is a high level of job dissatisfaction, and that this is probably associated with occupational downwards mobility that many of the group have faced. This has been the experience of the researcher in working with members of the Sri Lankan community and was the reason for the study. It also was the testimony of the workers who were interviewed. The registration levels are highest for the certificate holders, and this suggests that they have had the greatest difficulty in gaining skills based employment. It also suggests that employers have used lack of work experience in Australia as a sifting devise to determine skills levels. Thus while the qualifications of the workers are formally recognised many employers do not accept them in the face of skills advances in their industries.

Table 33: Registered with an employment agency?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	30	17	9
No	23	11	20
N/A	1	0	4
Total	54	28	33

In order to further test the level of job satisfaction the participants were asked if they would be prepared to move to another state if offered a new job. The results are shown in table and indicate that approximately 22% of the group would be prepared to move. Overall job mobility in Australia was an annual rate of 15.4% in 2003. Elementary clerical, sales and service workers had the highest rate of job and occupational change (11%). Professionals were least likely to change (2%). Overall 1.9% of employed people moved interstate (ABS, Cat. No. 6209.0).

Therefore, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the attitudes of the participants and the actions of all workers. The best comparison with the 22% who are prepared to move is the 36.5% who are looking for another job. Thus 60% of those who are looking for another job are prepared to move interstate, and this does suggest a high degree of dissatisfaction given the close nature of the Sri Lankan community. On the other hand all of the group have already changed countries in search for better employment, and a move interstate presumably be a less traumatic experience. If this is the case it might suggest that the workers are highly dependent socially and economically on the Melbourne Sri Lankan community.

Table 34: If offered a new job, would you be prepared to move to another state?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	8	8	5
No	42	18	22
N/A	4	2	6
Total	54	28	33

The issue of mobility and flexibility was further tested by asking the participants if they were prepared to move to another part of the state if they were

offered another job. The results are shown in table 35 and indicate that 43% of valid responses were prepared to move, with slightly over 50% of certificate holders. As a within state move would be less likely to take the workers out of their filial, ethnic and occupational networks this result suggests that the networks are important for the Sri Lankan migrants.

Table 35: Prepared to move to another part of this state if offered another job?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	20	10	11
No	19	17	17
N/A	15	1	5
Total	54	28	33

A question for this study was whether the qualifications held by the Sri Lankan workers were recognised in Australia. All have formal recognition so they were asked if they felt that the qualifications had been useful in gaining employment. The results are shown in table 36, and indicate that most of those who responded indicated that they had been useful. The results are relatively even across the three groups, although they are positive only for 39 of the 115 participants. They can be interpreted as consistent with the patterns of employment described above.

Table 36: Have your qualifications been useful in getting employment in Australia?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	15	8	16
No	11	10	11
N/A	28	10	6
Total	54	28	33

The group were also asked if they felt that their qualifications were up to date. The results are in table 37 and indicate that only a small percentage of workers felt that they were not. On the other hand a large percentage (49.5%) of those who responded indicated that they felt that they needed further training (table 38). It can be

seen that this result was high for the certificate holders. To an extent this is counter intuitive as employers typically use qualifications more in selecting higher skilled workers. However, the results do suggest that the certificate holders have tended to be occupationally or even trade bound and have out dated skill sets given their training in Sri Lanka and the technological advances in their trade areas.

Table 37: Are qualifications up-to-date?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	42	23	28
No	9	4	3
N/A	3	1	2
Total	54	28	33

Table 38: Need work related further education/ training in order to obtain employment?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	28	15	8
No	18	10	23
N/A	8	3	2
Total	54	28	33

This issue was further tested by asking the participants if they felt that their qualifications match the Australian job market. The results (table 39) show that only one of the participants felt that they do not.

Table 39: Do qualifications match with the job market in Australia?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	53	28	33
N/A	1	0	0
Total	54	28	33

Finally the workers were asked if they had difficulties in promotions and career prospects in Australia. The results are shown in table 40 and indicate a high proportion of positive results. Fifty percent or more of each group have given a ‘yes’ response, with a very large majority amongst diploma holders, although a large number did not respond to this question. However, it is somewhat surprising that such a small number of the group nominated any reason for this (table 41). To an extent the large percentage who indicated difficulties is consistent with other results and it also is likely that a large percentage of the general workforce would also respond in a positive manner to this question.

What is significant, however, is that only 5 of the group nominated lack of work experience in Australia as the primary reason for difficulties in promotions and career prospects. This is further evidence, therefore, that experience in the Australian workforce carries signals for employers related to the relevance and up-to-dateness of skills and possible of workplace enculturalisation of migrant workers.

Table 40: Difficulties in promotions and career prospects in Australia?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Yes	31	11	12
No	11	4	6
N/A	12	13	15
Total	54	28	33

Table 41: Type of difficulties experienced?

	CERTIFICATE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE
Qualifications	1	2	0
Language barrier	2	0	0
Cultural prejudices	0	7	2
Ask experience in Australia	0	1	4
Poor career prospects	7	0	3
Racial prejudices	13	0	0
N/A	31	18	24
Total	54	28	33

The final Chapter 8 would draw out the implications of my own work in response to my aim as set out in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.0 Hypothesis

This study has been based upon the experiences of the researcher over several decades in working with the Sri Lankan community in Melbourne. The work has been multi-faceted and has included that of acting as an interpreter and a range of community and employment support and liaison activities. I also have a background as a skilled Sri Lankan migrant, and have worked in skilled trades in Sri Lanka. This has led to my relationship with alumni of skilled workers with branches amongst the migrant workers in Melbourne.

Based upon these experiences I had developed the perception that Sri Lankan skilled migrants faced difficulties in gaining employment that matched their skill levels and their formal qualifications levels. All of the migrants had their qualifications formally recognised through the Australian Government, yet they appeared to have forms and levels of employment that did not match their training and employment experiences in Sri Lanka.

My work as an interpreter and translator has allowed me to view the social and economic lives of the Melbourne Sri Lankan community, as many of the matters that I deal with include legal procedures related to employment and financial transactions. To this extent I have had extensive ethnographic experiences within the Sri Lankan community, and this has been enhanced by the highly networked characteristics of the community and its cultural organisations and its educational and occupational alumni.

Of course, this informal ethnographic experience has been unstructured and not supported by any research procedures of note taking and structured or semi-structured interviews. Therefore, to extend the informal research I faced the options of a more structured ethnographic study or a more quantitative survey based approach. To an extent I have attempted both in this study.

My ethnographic experience with the Melbourne community of Sri Lankan migrant workers has been extensive. It extends over several decades on a day-to-day basis, and has been located in multiple transactions: financial and legal, social and community, employment and professional. I have used this experience within the dissertation in different ways. First it has provided the hypothesis of barriers to employment that is commensurate with qualifications and experiences. Second it has provided the basis for commentary on the results of the quantitative study.

Because of the richness and complexity of my experiences within the Sri Lankan community I believed that a quantitative study would be more appropriate. This is because the survey was designed upon the basis of this experience and was able to build upon the foundation of the experiences. Furthermore, the particular characteristics of the Melbourne based Sri Lankan skilled migrant community availed it self to the quantitative or survey based study. Half of the national Sri Lankan population is located in Melbourne and many of the Melbourne population are concentrated in the eastern suburbs. Of particular importance for a study of the employment and occupational experience of the skilled migrants have been their high rates of membership in distinctive and qualifications based alumni. It is unlikely that many, if any, other skilled migrant groups have such a distinctive and concentrated membership in local branches of alumni that differentiate them so clearly upon the basis of qualifications. This may well be a unique situation, which has provided a unique opportunity for a survey-based study.

While my experiences in the Sri Lankan community have been extensive and rich, I felt that it was important to conduct some more formal qualitative research as the basis for the preparation of the survey instrument. For this reason I decided to conduct a number of semi structured interviews with a number of skilled migrants. These people were selected to represent different types of skilled workers with different types of experiences in the Australian labour market. These interviews had been preceded by a preliminary workshop of people who were looking for employment or seeking to change or improve their employment.

8.1 Job Seeking and Difficulties

The 'Jobseekers Workshop outcome -1998' served as a preliminary survey for a general knowledge and understanding of the employment issues faced by the Sri Lankan community in Victoria. The result of the workshop suggested that all who attended expressed difficulties in their experiences in looking for a job.

It is recognised that many migrants and especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds typically experience difficulties in the employment market. However, the migrants who have attended the workshop all held qualifications ranging from certificate to the higher degree levels. The strength of the testimonies suggested to me that the difficulties may have been exceptionally strong, and this motivated the further investigation through the survey.

Upon the basis of this workshop, my broader experiences in the Sri Lankan community, and the preliminary interviews I formed a number of hypotheses about the possible reasons for employment market difficulties of the Sri Lankan skilled workers. They have been discussed in chapter 4, tested through the survey and analysed in chapter 7. This discussion is mainly confined to an interpretation of the data at face value. The survey consisted of 115 valid returns. Thus obviously is a small percentage of the Sri Lankan born Melbourne population, although it is a larger percentage of the skilled engineering population within this community. Nevertheless the sample size limits the capacity to interpret the data, and especially where other studies of migrant workers tend to be more general and do not ask the same set of questions as those in the survey.

Therefore, in this final chapter, I attempt to filter the results of the survey through the qualitative information that I have gained through the workshop, and the sample interviews, and especially through my many years of intensive experiences in working with the Melbourne Sri Lankan community in its community and working lives. Each of the apparent barriers to gaining employment and advancement that are cited in chapter 4 is considered through these sets of information.

Migrants consistently face disadvantages in gaining employment. They lack the networks of local born workers and they have poor information systems within the employment market. Networks and information systems have twin aspects: those of employers and those of job seekers. When they intersect the likelihood of employment opportunities will increase. Typically migrant workers will seek to gain access to networks, and expand the range of their networks.

Upon arrival migrants will typically reach to networks that are available. These networks may be community, occupational or industry based. In some cases workers are recruited from abroad, and these market varies between the extremes of highly paid 'knowledge workers', which include many of the one million Australians who live abroad, to the low skilled guest workers and in some cases illegal immigrant workers that are recruited by European, Middle Eastern, and North American countries (Sassen, 1988).

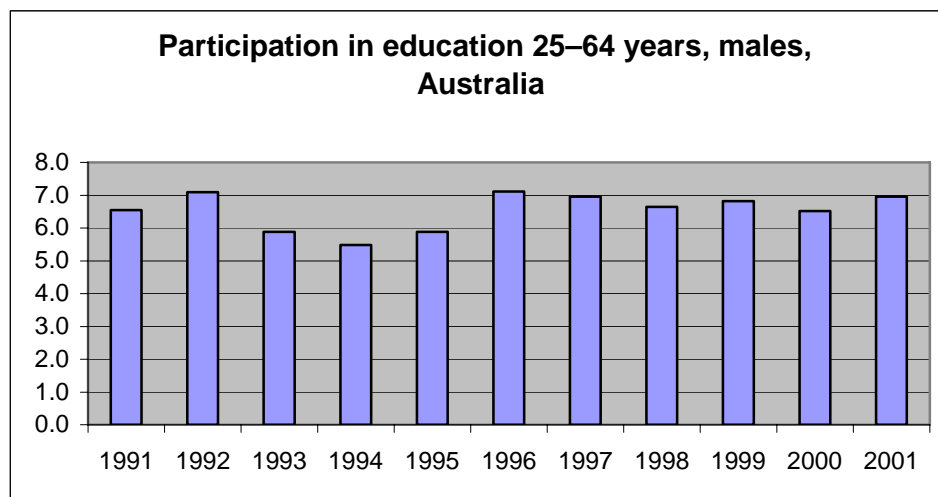
Southern Asia has been a major exporter of low skilled guest workers, and there have been a significant number of refugees from Sri Lanka that have entered Australia and European countries (see McDowell, 1996). Therefore, in this context the workers that have been the subject of this study have been an elite. They have entered Australia as under economic and family reunion categories. They all have qualifications that are formally recognised in Australia, and they have access to networks, including the alumni.

The employment results reported in chapter 7, therefore, appear to be relatively poor for this group. They are certainly worse than for the overall male labour force, with higher levels of contingent labour and informal employment, and a high percentage of workers that are seeking other or better employment. The proportion of the participants in the survey who were looming to change jobs (38%) is higher than the percentage of Australian workers in employment that were looking for another job in 2001 (about 8% - ABS Cat. No. 6245). The employment results for the group also appear to be poor in comparison to the experiences of all migrants, as reported by Richardson et al (2001).

8.2 Skills levels, education and skills obsolescence

A further sign of lack of engagement is the low levels of participation in education amongst the group. A very small percentage (16.5%) had undertaken any formal education of training since they arrived in Australia and only ten indicated that they were undertaking any further study. This current level is comparable with levels for all male adults in Australia, but below those for all migrant groups (table 42). Typically more highly qualified adults are more likely to undertake further study, and in this context the level of below 10% for the Sri Lankan group could be considered as low.

Figure 1



Source: ABS, Cat No. 4230.0

Almost all of the Sri Lankan migrants that participated in the survey are qualified and have their Sri Lankan work experience in the manufacturing or engineering sector. Despite the rhetoric about knowledge workers it is this sector that has been most affected by technological change and transfer. In Australia employment in the manufacturing sector to a significant extent over the past two decades, and as noted in chapter 6 it continues to fall. On the other hand this sector has the highest level of productivity increases, which for the two decades to 1999–2000 were 35%. Labour productivity increases in this sector over the same period were 61% (Productivity Commission Estimates, 2006).

The manufacturing sector is subject to the most intensive international competitive pressures. Costs have fallen dramatically with the introduction of new

technologies and the ability of companies to transfer plants to low labour cost countries. In developed countries the emphasis has been placed upon quality, design and innovation. For developing countries the World Bank has concluded that their major competitive weakness in the manufacturing sectors is the weak rate of technology transfer (De Ferranti, 2003).

Therefore, it is likely that most if not all of the skilled Sri Lankan migrants may have entered Australia with limited exposure to the more advanced technologies that have been introduced into their trades and occupations. So when potential skilled migrants applied for permanent residency in Australia, it takes up to one to two years for the processing to be completed. This time-gap would cause an even greater obsolescence of their skills by the time these people actually migrate.

This obsolescence would be exacerbated by skills training in Sri Lanka, which was out of date. This was recognised in Sri Lanka through the 'Year of Education Reform, 1997' (see chapter 3). The failing of the plan, in addition to the already obsolete existing system would make it even harder for the immigrants to adapt their skills into the Australian employment context.

The earlier years of the Sri Lankan education system are very much in the eastern culture of teacher-centered learning, compared with the more student centred learning in Australia, and especially in the vocational education and training system.

This leads to the question of whether Sri Lankan skilled migrants need further training upon their arrival in Australia, especially within the context of skills shortages, especially in the skilled trades. The main difficulties in the Australian employment market, as identified by the Sri Lankan workers have been lack of experience in the Australian workplace. Obviously it is not possible for this issue to be directly addressed, and the challenge is to find mechanisms that will assist in initial access to employment.

It would appear that the networks that are available to the Sri Lankan workers have a weak capacity to provide this access. It also is the case that a number of the workers in the survey identified themselves as having weak English skills. Therefore,

there would seem to be a case for the introduction of educational programs that combine English language skills and intensive skills training that covers skills related to the more advanced technologies and techniques that are now used in the engineering industries and trades.

Currently the Commonwealth and State governments are investing in a number of programs to address skills shortages. These include mechanisms to improve the apprenticeship system, the establishment of the Australian Vocational Colleges, and the announcement of skills centres in Victoria. Non-completions of apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia in 2005 were 33.5% and 35.1% for the skilled trades (NCVER, 2005). As well, a large percentage of skilled workers leave their trades within two or three years after the completion of their training. Australia has always relied upon migrants to meet a large proportion of its skill needs (Hugo, 2002). In the case of skilled Sri Lankan workers it would seem that this source of skills is being poorly used.

Semi structured interviews; the focus group and informal discussions with Sri Lankan workers have revealed problems faced by Sri Lankan workers in the Australian workplace. Workers typically have identified unfamiliarity with local idioms and colloquialisms, and a lack of understanding of local humour. As well, Sri Lankans have a different attitude towards authority and have different expectations of workplace hierarchies. It is likely that the lack of Australian workplace experience is a problem not simply because of the lack of exposure to modern technology and techniques, but also because a lack of familiarity with local workplace cultures.

In the case of the Sri Lankan migrants this is probably exacerbated by the fact that they generally are entering workplaces where there are strong localised workplace cultures. Many post war migrants to Australia entered workplaces where migrant workers formed a majority (such as the large manufacturing companies) or where the migrant workers are relatively isolated from a dominant workplace cultures (such as cleaning work). However, many of the workplaces that the Sri Lankan skilled migrants have attempted to enter are small to medium size engineering firms that have strong localised cultures. These cultures are strongly represented in the

apprenticeship system, with strong gender identification (Miller et al, 2005) and strong network characteristics (Wright, 1991).

8.3 Networks

The skilled Sri Lankan migrants that have come to Melbourne would appear to have some significant advantages over many other groups of migrants, especially those who enter under family reunion and refugee categories. Most speak English, albeit as a second language. All have a post school qualification that is formally recognised in Australia, and they have experienced buoyant labour market conditions over the past decade, including a major shortage of skills. Furthermore, all have entered the country with readily available social and economic networks, in the form of the alumni.

Given these advantages it is surprising that the employment outcomes and the levels of satisfaction with these outcomes are so poor. They are worse than those for the overall population, the overall migrant population, and for workers with post school qualifications. They are certainly worse for males from each of these categories.

It is possible that the engineering industries have strong cultures of domestic networks, which make them difficult for migrant workers to access. However, as already noted workers with post school qualifications have strong patterns of occupational mobility, and in a strong labour market these workers would have opportunities to seek employment in other industries. In fact this has happened with a large percentage of workers. However, they mostly have entered forms of contingent employment and even informal employment.

The reasons for the lack of employment market success and mobility are difficult to identify. It is clear that lack of experience in Australian workplaces is the most identifiable reason. However, this may hide a range of other factors, such as the obsolescence of skills. It also should be noted that employment involves two searching and selection processes: those of the employer and those of the worker. The mediating factors in these searching processes are the attributes in workers that are

sought by the employers and the attributes of the employment sought by the workers. Where these attributes do not meet then the employment outcomes are unlikely to be favourable.

For the purpose of this study, within the skilled engineering occupations there are two sets of networks: the local trade and industry based networks, and those of the Sri Lankan networks, notably the alumni. It is possible, and perhaps likely that these two sets of networks do not intersect to any significant extent, and where they do the mediating variables also have a weak intersection. If this is the case it suggests two sets of problems for the Sri Lankan workers.

First, the networks at their disposal provide poor access to the networks and information systems that can lead to their desired employment outcomes. It may even be the case that the availability and subsequent dependence upon the alumni have limited activities that could broaden and strengthen their access to other trade and industry based networks.

Second, the relatively closed nature of their networks have limited other activities that would expand networks and improve the skill levels and other attributes of the Sri Lankan workers that would strengthen their employment success. As discussed above, the percentages of the group that had studied or were undertaking study in Australia are low, and this suggests that further study is not seen as a strong means of better employment access.

8.4 Conclusion

The transfer of occupational skills from one country to another is a complex process that is mediated by a myriad of social and economic factors that will vary across nationalities and individuals. This study of the experiences of Sri Lankan skilled migrants provides some small insights into these processes and experiences of one small group. The study has been advantaged by the highly localised nature of the Sri Lankan community and its occupational networks. These have provided the opportunity for some different insights into the experiences of one national group.

It would seem that these experiences are different. They are different in their community and network characteristics. The community is relatively localised, especially as the immigration patterns have been spread over more than a decade. The transfer of three separate alumni to Melbourne must be fairly unusual. As well it would seem that the group has experienced poor employment outcomes, given some of their educational and network assets.

It is not possible to locate any clear reason for these outcomes through the study. The lack of work experience in Australia is the clear recorded reason. However, this would apply to all immigrants. Therefore, the conclusion for this study must resort to some speculation, which is that the strengths of these networks may also be their weakness. That is the networks have limited the wider searching and reskilling activities that many of the workers may have undertaken if they had not had access to their alumni and other nationality based networks.

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Personal correspondence

Chintha F - Personal Resume

Hon. Jason Wood, 4 August, 2005.

Hon. Ruddock Philip, 4 Feb 2003

Appendix 1:

Social and work experiences in the Sri Lankan Community.

- Secretary/President/Trustee/Life member of the Sri Lanka club of Victoria.
- Established and developed the SAPTHA-FORCE' Youth Support Movement.
- Numerous radio broadcast roles, including Sinhala language (BBC-London 1972-1974), multicultural radio (Melbourne) 3EA and continuing on SBS Radio (Sinhala language) and 3ZZZ, including a Sinhala language lesson once a week.
- Teaching and developing Sinhala language in Melbourne at Monash University, and Director of 'Sinhala Language Courses Australia'
- Authored Sinhala phrase book and cassettes
- Established a Sinhala language library for free lending to the community;
- Organised a range of community concerts for refugees and other causes.
- Officiating religious sessions at Buddhist and Hindu temples, and founder and President of the 'Spiritual Advancement Institute', Melbourne.
- Designed and supervised the construction floats including one for the Moomba Festival Float, depicting Sri Lankan culture.
- One of the founders of the Sinhala Cultural and Community Services Foundation Victoria.
- An actor, and director of cultural theatrical plays, including a television play, and the director and producer of stage productions.
- Community consultant to Commonwealth and State government, community organisations and individuals.
- Chair of the Sinhalese Language Examination Panel of the National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI);
- Assistance to refugees in translation and other advice, and translator for the Refugee Review Tribunal, Migrant Review Tribunal, Family courts, Federal Court, Work-care, Legal-Aid, Immigration Dept, etc.

- Presentation of papers at conferences, youth forums and seminars on Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia and their employment cultural and community issues.
- Assistance for Sri Lankan migrants to find employment, advise them in their career advancement, showing pathways in further studies in conjunction with AMES (Adult Multicultural Education Services); Employment Plus (The Salvation Army); Centrelink; Migrant Resource Centres, through contacts in Public and Private sector workplaces, and Educational Institutions;
- Member of the three Alumni: Sri Lanka-German Tech. Training old pupils Association, Sri Lanka Diplomates Association and Sri Lanka Professional Engineers Association
- One of five founding members of the Committee for Sri Lanka
- Chairman of the Swarna Padma Forum Inc., an organisation with the objective of initiating exchange programs on art and literature between Australia and Sri Lanka

Karu Liyanaratchi

14. What is your main area or current study or training?

1. I.T./COMPUTERS 2. MANAGEMENT 3. MARKETING
4. ENGINEERING 5. ENGLISH

15. Are you studying at any of the following: (please circle)

University / TAFE / CAE / or anywhere else

UNI	TAFE	CAE	ELSEWHERE
1	2	3	4

16. Have you previously studied in Australia?

1. YES / NO 2. YES / NO

If YES when? 1/995 2/96 3/97 If NO go to No.18 4/98 5/99 6/2000 7/01 8/02

9/03 10/04

17. What have you studied in Australia?

REFER Q14 CODES ABOVE

18. Do you have a job, a small business or any other work or self employed?

If YES, specify:

1. YES / NO 2. YES / NO

3. YES / NO

4. YES / NO

5. YES / NO

6. YES / NO

7. YES / NO

8. YES / NO

9. YES / NO

10. YES / NO

11. YES / NO

12. YES / NO

13. YES / NO

14. YES / NO

15. YES / NO

16. YES / NO

17. YES / NO

18. YES / NO

19. YES / NO

20. YES / NO

21. YES / NO

22. YES / NO

23. YES / NO

24. YES / NO

25. YES / NO

26. YES / NO

27. YES / NO

28. YES / NO

29. YES / NO

30. YES / NO

31. YES / NO

32. YES / NO

33. YES / NO

34. YES / NO

35. YES / NO

36. YES / NO

37. YES / NO

38. YES / NO

39. YES / NO

40. YES / NO

41. YES / NO

42. YES / NO

43. YES / NO

44. YES / NO

45. YES / NO

46. YES / NO

47. YES / NO

48. YES / NO

49. YES / NO

50. YES / NO

51. YES / NO

52. YES / NO

53. YES / NO

54. YES / NO

55. YES / NO

56. YES / NO

57. YES / NO

58. YES / NO

59. YES / NO

60. YES / NO

61. YES / NO

62. YES / NO

63. YES / NO

64. YES / NO

65. YES / NO

66. YES / NO

67. YES / NO

68. YES / NO

69. YES / NO

70. YES / NO

71. YES / NO

72. YES / NO

73. YES / NO

74. YES / NO

75. YES / NO

76. YES / NO

77. YES / NO

78. YES / NO

79. YES / NO

80. YES / NO

81. YES / NO

82. YES / NO

83. YES / NO

84. YES / NO

85. YES / NO

86. YES / NO

87. YES / NO

88. YES / NO

89. YES / NO

90. YES / NO

91. YES / NO

92. YES / NO

93. YES / NO

94. YES / NO

95. YES / NO

96. YES / NO

97. YES / NO

98. YES / NO

99. YES / NO

100. YES / NO

Karu Liyanaratchi

ඔබ් හම් ගේතු මොනවාද?

මගේ සුදුසුකම් හා පළපුරුද්ද අදාළ වැඩ / වෙනත්කම් සිරිම / රැකියාවේ දියුණුවට බලාපොරොත්තු වීම
නොමැත. / කරන වැඩ මැඩ පාලනයක් නොමැත. / පිට ජාතිකයන් මැඩ අභිමතයක් / සුපරිවිකාර ගත්
අගනම් ගේවකයන් / ගුණිති හානි ප්‍රශ්න / කරාමය නොගේවිම / සිතවුනුකු උවදාරන නොවැඩිම /
වැඩ නොවන කරන නොමැති වීම / වෙනත් කරුණු (මැලොප වත්තර ලකුණු කරන්න.)

- Q29. 29. Have you had difficulties in getting a job in Australia? YES / NO (1) ඔබ් / වැඩ (2)
- Q30. 30. If YES what form of difficulties you had to undergo? REFER Q45 CODES (1) ඔබ් / වැඩ (2)
- Q31. 31. Are you registered with an employment agency (like the former Commonwealth Employment Service) YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q32. 32. If NO what is your main reason for not registering with an employment service? (1) I thought it will not help (2) I had no information about it
- Q33. 33. If you were offered a new job, would you be prepared to move to another state? (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q34. 34. If you are registered with an employment agency did the employment agency ask you to come for an interview? YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q35. 35. This year how many times did the employment agency ask you to come in for an interview? ONE TWO THREE (1) ONE (2) TWO (3) THREE
- Q36. 36. How likely do you think the employment agency could find you a reasonable job? Confident / Not sure (1) Confident / Not sure (2)
- Q37. 37. Overall how do you feel about the employment agency? Useful / Useless (1) Useful / (2) Useless
- Q38. 38. If you were offered another job would you be prepared to move to another part of this state? YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q39. 39. How much work experience do you have in your mother country or another country? Years..... Months..... Were you trained? YES / NO (1) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. (2)
- Q40. 40. Have you had difficulties in promotions and career prospects in Australia? YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2) If YES give details ... REFER Q45 CODES / REF. Q28 FOR TRADE CERT. / REF. Q45 FOR DIP. LEVEL.
- Qualifications
- Q41. 41. Do your qualifications match with the job market in Australia? YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q42. 42. Have your qualifications been useful in getting employment in Australia? YES/NO (1) YES / NO (2)
- Q43. 43. Are they up-to-date? YES / NO (1) YES / NO (2)

Karu Liyanaratchi

Q44

44. Do you need work related further education / training in order to obtain employment? ☒ YES / ☒ NO

රැකියාවක් ලබා ගැනීම සඳහා වැඩිදුර පුහුණුවක් හෝ රැකියා සම්බන්ධ වැඩිදුර පුහුණුවක් අවශ්‍යද?
ඔව් / නැත ඔව් නම් විස්තර කරන්න.

Accreditation from an Australian Institution ☒ 3

DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING A JOB

(please circle as appropriate)

රැකියාවක් ලබා ගැනීමේදී මුහුණ දුන් දුෂ්කරතා

(කවරක්ම හැඟවන පරිදි ලකුණු කරන්න.)

Q45

45. Qualifications / Language barrier / Cultural prejudices / Age barrier / Gender / unsuccessful at interviews / Ask experience in Australia / New techniques due to globalisation

පුහුණුව / ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව / සංස්කෘතික වෙනස්කම් / වයස වැඩි වීම / ස්ත්‍රී පුරුෂ භාවය / සම්මුඛ පරීක්ෂණ අසාර්ථක වීම / ඕස්ට්‍රේලියාවේ පළපුරුද්ද ඉල්ලීම / ඕස්ට්‍රේලියාවේ නිකා භාෂණය වඩා වෙනස් වීම

Q45.1

45.1 Difficulty scale: extremely / considerably / somewhat / not so difficult

දුෂ්කරතා පරිමාණය : ඉතාමත් / සැලකිය යුතු දුෂ්කර / තරමක් / ඉතාමත් නොදුෂ්කර

A

B

C

D

This is a confidential questionnaire

මෙය රහස්‍ය ප්‍රශ්නාවලියකි

Q45.2

45.2 Would you be willing to participate in a short (approx. 30 minutes) interview later this year? If YES, please provide your name

මේ වසර අවසානයේදී (විනාඩි 30ක පමණ) කතවනවත් කිරීමට නැඹුරු නම්, ඔබේ නම

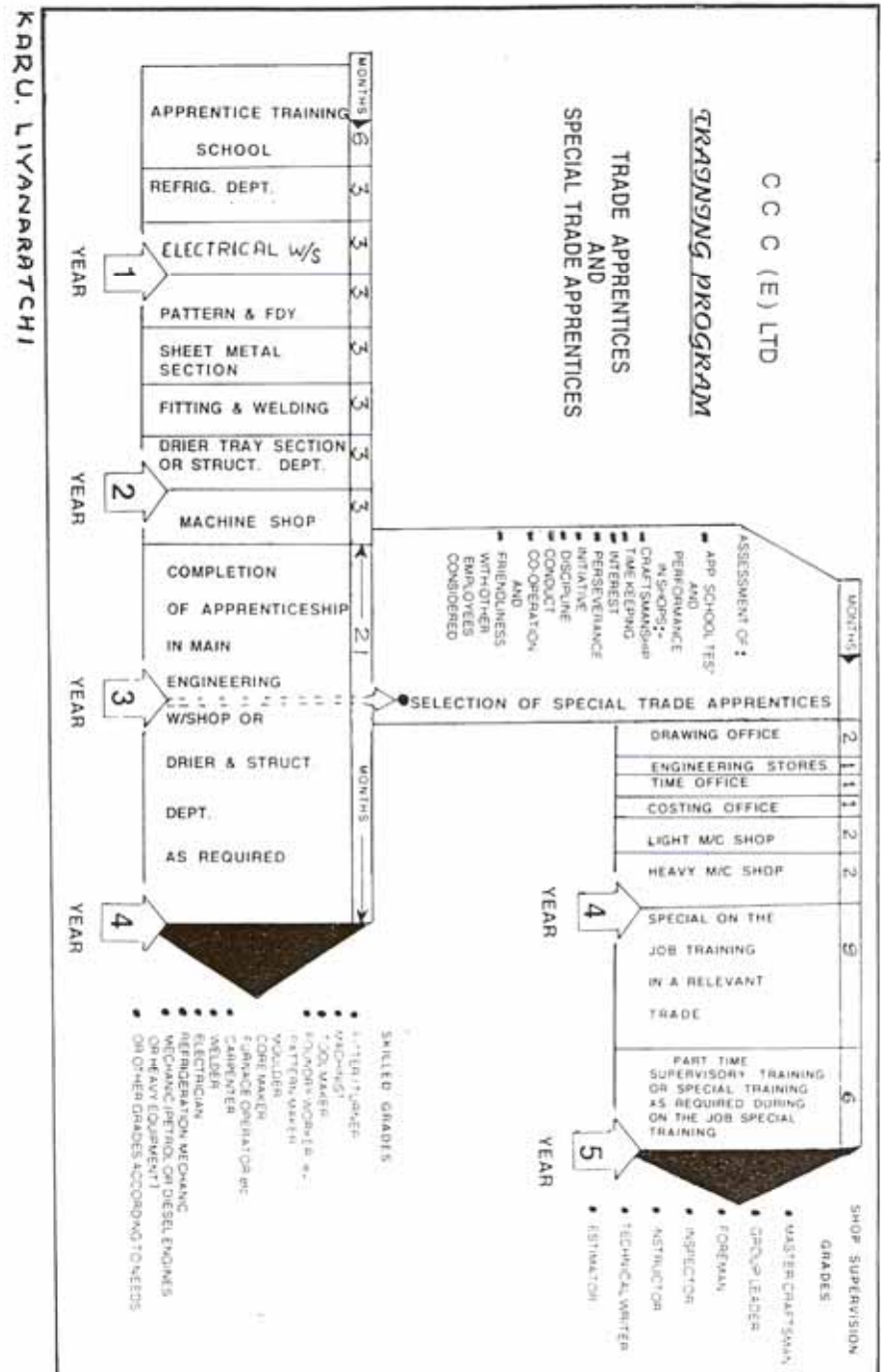
☒ YES / ☒ NO ☒ 2

AND

සහ

telephone number. :

දුරකථන අංකය ලියන්න.....



EIGHT

THE CEYLON DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1956.

Advertising Supplement

GREETINGS TO THE HEADS OF STATES & DELEGATES TO THE 5th NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT CONFERENCE

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MESSAGE FROM THE HON. A.J. GRASSBY, COMMISSIONER FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS

This is an opportunity for me to salute the Sri Lankan Club of Victoria and its 600 members from both Sri Lanka and Australia. I have had the pleasure of being at the Club in the past and but for my current absence on an overseas mission I would be with you again in 1982.

It comes as a surprise to many people that the contribution from Sri Lanka and the Indian sub-continent over the past 200 years of Australian history exceeds 100,000 people. It is recorded that on the First Fleet which signified the birth of modern Australia on January 26, 1788, there was a sailor from Sri Lanka, and so the links between Australia and Sri Lanka go back to the very birth of the nation.

The contribution to the Australian community which has been made from Sri Lanka has been a particularly distinguished one and both the Sri Lankan Club of Victoria and indeed all of the people with links in Sri Lanka can be proud of the contribution that has been made.

Best wishes for not only the success of the annual occasion but for the years ahead.



(The Hon) A.J. GRASSBY
Commissioner for Community Relations

April 28, 1982

OUR CLUB

On the fourth of February 1987, the nineteenth anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence from colonial rule, eight Sri Lankans and two Australians met in a house in Balaclava with the view of forming a Sri Lankan Club in Victoria.

At that time entry into the only other Sri Lankan organisation was based on the then prevalent Australian Immigration Policy — the white Australia policy and unfortunately only Sri Lankans of so called European origin were eligible to join. The ten conveners agreed that there was a need for another Sri Lankan organisation which would be open to ALL Sri Lankans and thus was born the Ceylon Club of Victoria.

Those who attended this meeting were Mr. Dayal Aboyssekere, Mr. Laksman Aiwu, Mr. Hameel Badurdeen, Mr. Chandra De Silva, Mrs. Berenice De Silva, Mr. Bradman Don, Mr. Susantha Jayasekera, Mrs. Florence Jayasekera, Mr. Tony Pereira and Mr. Tudor Sirisena.

The first three years of the club saw quite a few teething problems common to all new organisations. Membership numbers ebbed and flowed, members argued and debated over problems ranging from the independence of the editor to methods of selection of a cricket team. However the congenience of the club survived. It was during this period that the club had the privilege and distinction of having hosted Dr. Jim Cairns, a future acting Prime Minister of Australia as chief guest at this second annual dance.

The club was very active in the sporting field and fielded a very strong cricket eleven.

The next five years saw the club firmly establishing itself as a prominent group within the local Sri Lankan community. One of the most significant events during this period was the staging of a cultural show at the RMIT on the 14th of April 73. Members, their guests and well wishers were afforded the privilege of viewing a Sri Lankan arts and handicrafts exhibition, films, a memorable variety performance staged by members, and of tasting a delicious Sri Lankan meal, all for a cost of two dollars fifty cents. It was also during this period that members witnessed the spectacle of communalism raising its ugly head in club elections. They heard the cry "Do not vote for the Hunkaya, vote for the Sinhala" — however the members were wise enough to reject this divisive exhortation and commit themselves to the survival of the club, a commitment which still survives. During this period it was felt that the club should acquire its own premises and thus began the long and at times acrimonious debate on the issue which of course still continues.

At the club's seventh Annual General Meeting in July 1974, it was unanimously decided to change the club's name to accord with the change in Ceylon's name to Sri Lanka. The club became known as "The Sri Lanka Club of Victoria". An unsuccessful attempt was made by some individuals to form themselves under the club's previous name.

Over the next five years the club continued to expand in membership and its activities. Members were able to take part in various sports tournaments like Billiards, Snooker, Badminton, Carrom, Table Tennis, Chess, Draughts and Card Games ranging from "500" to "304".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11